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THE BEAUTIFUL ANGEL.

BY ERNEST E. LEXFORD.

"I am so weary!" she told us;
"Tired of sorrow and pain;
Tired of toiling and striving
Always and always in vain."
Slowly she faded, as faded
Day into beautiful night,
And we wept, as for one who is going
Out evermore from our sight.
We had thought that death was a terror;
A visitor dark and grim;
And we shuddered, as he came nearer,
And shrank away from him.
But he came to her so sweetly,
So gently—as those most kind
Draw near to those whom they pity—
That terror fled our mind.
And we thought, as we saw her lying
In death, with her face grown fair,
No traces of cares or sorrows,
Of tears nor of suffering there,
That death was a pitying angel,
Who loveth all so well,
That he bringeth to those weary
His rest unspeakable.

Tiger Dick:

THE CASHIER'S CRIME.

A TALE OF MAN'S HATE AND WOMAN'S FAITH.

BY PHILIP S. WARNE.

CHAPTER III.

A FALSE FRIEND.

We have anticipated, in order to bring into consecutive review those incidents between which there is a natural association. We must now go back to the day subsequent to Fred Powell's initiation into the mysteries of the JUNGLE.

All day long a cloud had rested on Mr. Powell's face; and Cecil, watching him, guessed at the truth, and was in a measure prepared for what was to come. After all the clerks had taken their leave, the banker fussed about his desk a little while, and then nervously clearing his throat, turned toward Cecil, and began:

"Mr. Beaumont, during the few years of our acquaintance I have found you a man in every way worthy of confidence; and I now feel as if I could approach you as a friend. I wish to consult you on a very embarrassing subject—one that is full of pain for me, as a parent."

Mr. Powell hesitated, and nervously rearranged some papers on his desk. Cecil Beaumont cast a quick glance at him. From the way in which he began, Cecil was in doubt as to the drift of his words. He replied in a voice modulated to sympathetic tones:

"I am truly grateful, sir, for your estimate of me, and for the confidence you are pleased to repose in me. Believe me, I shall be only too happy to be of service to you in any way in my power."

"It is about my son," pursued Mr. Powell, with increasing perturbation. "I wish to inquire into his associations. You are a young man, Mr. Beaumont, and more or less familiar with the manner of life of other young men about you. Furthermore, you, not being related to Frederick, would have ready access to facts concerning him which would be withheld from me, as his father, even if I could bring myself to the humiliation of publishing my anxiety about him, by applying to my friends."

The father stopped with flushed face and averted eyes. Cecil coughed slightly, and seemed almost as much embarrassed as the elder man.

"You know, sir," he said, hesitatingly, "that I am not much of a hand to go around—I keep to myself a great deal—and therefore am not so familiar with Frederick as another in my place would be likely to be. But if you could intimate the line of inquiry, sir—what you wish to know about him—"

And, leaving the sentence incomplete, Cecil looked up at his employer, apparently in helpless embarrassment.

A paroxysm of pain shot athwart Mr. Powell's face; but he set his lips firmly, and said: "Last night he was brought home in a state of intoxication. This is the first case that has come to my knowledge—the first intimation that his habits were not what they should be. Men do not leap at a bound into dissipation, Mr. Beaumont. There must have been introductory steps. I wish to ascertain through you, if you will lend me your assistance, to what extent this has been carried, who are his intimates, and how long he has been under their pernicious influence."

A covert gleam of malicious triumph shot from Cecil's eyes; but he replied in a tone of earnest commiseration: "I cannot express to you, sir, the pain it gives me to hear you speak as you have. It would be unjust to you, and perhaps prejudicial to Frederick, to hide from you that I have for some time deprecated the company with which your son has been seen to associate; but I did not dream that he would so far forget himself as your words imply."

"It is playing with edge-tools, Mr. Beaumont," replied the parent, with a tremor in his voice and tears in his eyes. "No man is safe, but he who abstains absolutely from the use of intoxicating liquors. I would rather bury the boy to-day, as dearly as I love him, than to see him grow up to a life of degradation and a grave of shame—the slave of a hellish appetite, that knows no satiety."



"Sit down and take something to cool off on," said Dick.

He bowed his head upon the desk, and his frame quivered with suppressed emotion. It was a sight to move the coldest heart; but Cecil saw in it only the opportunity it afforded to destroy his rival.

Presently the father mastered his emotions, and, looking up, said: "Mr. Beaumont, I may rely upon you to look into this matter as a friend?" "I feel it my duty to help you, Mr. Powell, though it is a hard part to play. I shall feel so like a spy and informer; but my interest in the real welfare of your son will enable me to put aside this feeling, which I believe to be a mistaken notion of honor."

"Your high sense of honor does you credit; but, as you say, the motive is the true criterion. A friend and a father can work together only for the boy's well-being."

"By the way, sir, here is one of Frederick's chums now, crossing the street. Perhaps we can get some information from him. If you will just step into the bed-room, and leave the door ajar, I will call him in and converse with him about the matter. He is Brown & Thurlow's bookkeeper, and we have some papers that are to go to them."

Mr. Powell glanced out of the window and saw Billy Sanderson. A shadow passed over his face, and with a heavy heart he stepped into the bed-room.

Cecil tapped on the window-pane and beckoned to the "decoy duck." A moment afterward that worthy entered, with his customary swagger.

"Howdy, little one," he said. "What's the row?"

"These papers are just in readiness; and, as you were passing, I thought I might as well let you have them now as in the morning—if you are going to the store?"

"You're a gentleman and a scholar, and a good judge of whisky! My noble friend, there's just where I'm going."

"Not in a hurry, are you? Have a cigar and be a little neighborly."

"Did you ever see me in a hurry, pard, or when I wouldn't smoke? Throw a whole box at me. There's just one advantage that Old Nick has over an American citizen—he's never at inconvenience for a light. Just hit me with a match, if you please."

Cecil complied, (not literally,) and then said: "By the way, Sanderson, where have you kept yourself of late? Were you at the theater last night? They have some very fine talent, for once in a way."

"Nary theater, ole man. I was paying homage to Old Nick last night."

"In what particular way?"

"Oh, drowning trouble; but the trouble beat me, I'll confess."

"Do I understand you to say that you got intoxicated?"

"My pippin, you shook me by the use of such a vulgar term! Now, I am classical in my expressions—always. You should have asked: 'Am I to infer that you got outside of too much tanglefoot?' or: 'Do you mean to imply that the sidewalk was dancing a redowa, when you came home at dewy morn?' My reply would have been: 'My bosom friend, you're a cluckin' loud, and a mighty narrow sidewalk at that!'"

"I will heed your instructions in future. But did your companions find the sidewalk so narrow?"

"Look-a-here, pard; you don't mean to insinuate that I was the only exalted one of the party? No, sir! I'd scorn such an imputation

of selfishness. Inspiration is plenty enough, so that a whole party may become prophets."

"Far be it from me to attribute such unworthiness to one of your acknowledged generosity. But how large a party of prophets did you have?"

"Only three of us. The gentle Freddy, myself and the lamp-post. We were a high old trinity, you bet."

"Freddy? Not Fred Powell?"

"Who else? But look-a-here, my bow-legged bantam, of course I know you're as close as an oyster; but if the walls should whisper the tender tale, so that it came to the ears of his governor, wouldn't it kick up a row?"

"But does Fred ever drink?—that is, to excess, I mean."

"Drink? Would you have him go thirsty? Water's very injurious this warm weather, you know. It does very well for navigating purposes; but as a beverage—ugh!"

"Yes; but one may observe moderation."

"Oh, he's moderate—very! You ought to have seen him at the Dutch Gardens last night. Hal! hal! They're talking of enlarging their accommodations. Fred can spoil more of Germany's Hope than any kid of his inches inside of seven contiguous counties."

"You must have been a hilarious company on your way back to town."

"Hilarious! Now you're hitting me near home. I can sing like a lark; and Fred—his voice is just beautiful!"

"And what time did you get back, pray tell?"

"Oh, we didn't stay out there long. We came back in the shank of the evening. Then we had a set to at billiards, and after that went to River street, and threw away our money. That is to say, I did; but Fred—he's a two-horse team and a blind mule into the bargain. Oh, hush! but he just lined his pockets with the yellow boys! Of course that's a figure of speech in these days of inflation."

"Let me understand you. There are so many ways of throwing away money."

"Oh, we bestowed it on charity, you know."

"Aren't you a little ambiguous in your choice of expression?" asked Cecil, with a smile.

"What, don't you twig?"

"I can't say that I do, if that means understand."

"Oh, you're innocent, you are. Why don't you write Sunday-school books?"

"Isn't there some simpler form of expression in which you might couch your ideas, so as to bring them within the compass of ordinary understanding?"

"Not up in the technicalities? Oh, well, Fred and I went to bucking the tiger just for amusement; and he pared his nails handsome. I can tell you!"

"You don't mean to say that Fred gambled—actually gambled?"

"Oh! oh! When will you get beyond such unparadiseable vulgarism! Now, I don't say that he gambled. No, sir; I never use so uncouth a term. I say he negotiated a loan of a cool hundred at the bank of Tiger Dick. Hallo! what's that? It sounded like somebody groaning. Gads! if Fred's old governor should drop in on our solitude and hear my eulogium on his dutiful son, wouldn't it make his eyes stick out! But I must jog along. I don't know but I've been wagging my jaw too much already. By-by!"

And the "decoy duck," repenting after the mischief was done, took himself off.

"By Jove! he couldn't have played into my

hands more completely. The fellow's been drinking again to-day," was Cecil's mental observation; but he turned toward the bedroom door with a look of sympathetic grief. No sound came from the room, however; nor did Mr. Powell appear.

Cecil turned to his desk and resumed his writing.

Half an hour afterward, Mr. Powell came out of the bedroom. His eyes were red with weeping, such tears as a father will shed over the ruin of an only son, and his form seemed bent beneath the weight of sorrow that rested on him.

"My friend," he said, grasping Cecil's hand, "I thank you for the aid you have given me. Volumes could not tell me more than I have learned during these few minutes. It was a bitter draught; but now I know the whole truth, and can take steps to remedy the evil."

"Mr. Powell," said Cecil, in a feeling tone, "I cannot express the pain it has given me to inflict this suffering upon you. But I felt that it was better to draw the whole truth out of him, if possible."

"You are right. I wished to know the whole truth."

Then Mr. Powell bathed his face and removed the evidences of his grief, so that when May came for him with the carriage he was composed enough to go out on the street.

"Tally one!" cried Cecil, in exultation, as the carriage disappeared around the corner.

"Oh, I'll bring down my fine gentleman! It's but a step from gambling to forgery. I'll put him through the mill, without mercy. She will never marry a man branded with felony."

That evening Mr. Powell and Fred were closeted together for an hour. When Fred came out, he looked like a man thoroughly ashamed of himself.

May met him in the hall as he was taking down his hat, and laying her hand on his arm, and looking pleadingly in his face, she said:

"Are you going out to-night, Fred? Stay with me, and I will play and sing to you."

"Sis, don't you begin," said her brother, with a slight show of impatience. "When a fellow tumbles into the mud, he doesn't need to be told of it by every one he meets. I've had about all I can stand for one night, and guess I'll get along without 'the gentle influences of home,' and that sort of thing."

He went out, pulling his hat over his eyes moodily.

"If he was only more like Cecil!" murmured his sister, watching him with tears in her eyes.

How distorted is the view that one soul gains of another through the agency of our imperfect senses!

Half an hour afterward Fred met Billy Sanderson on the street.

"Ye gods, what a face!" cried the "decoy duck." "Are you going to be measured for your shroud, or has your Dulcinea jilted you for a soldier? You look like a whipped cur on a rainy day."

"Spare your compliments, Sanderson, until you find some one more in a humor for them," said Fred, without a smile.

"Humor be hanged! Come in and take an enlivener."

"Nothing for me, Billy."

"What! Nothing cheerful?"

"Nothing."

"Eh? Pugh! you're joking."

"Never was more serious in my life."

Billy looked at his friend inquiringly. Fred was frowning gloomily.

"Look a-here, boss," said the "decoy," "I pass. What are you going to make it? Haven't I joined the Good Templars?"

Billy grinned at the idea.

"No templars in mine," replied Fred. "I swore off with somebody, perhaps! Very foolish practice. Have to place your whole dependence on water this warm weather. Too thin!"

"I haven't sworn off. Confound it, man! somebody's blowed to the governor. He knows the whole story—Tiger Dick and all."

"The Gentleman in Black he does!"

"Some blabbing booby has dipped in his oar where it wasn't needed. I knew well enough that I had made a fool of myself, without a lecture on the subject. I don't see how I came to lose my head. Otherwise I should never have gone to such a place."

"Mixed drinks, my bosom friend. Guess I was a little boozey myself. Feel kind of queer about the head-piece yet. But say, Fred, what kind of a swell is that cashier of yours? Would he throw the veil of charity over your little peccadilloes, if they accidentally came to his knowledge?"

"Not he!" replied Fred, with sudden interest. He felt, instinctively, that there was a rivalry between Cecil and himself for the favor of Florence Goldthorp.

"Then I guess he blabbed to the governor."

"But how did he know anything about it?—even to the amount that I won?"

"Friend of my youth, I don't try to screen myself—not a bit. In the cause of temperance, we destroyed some reg'lar p'ison, lest it should insure the innocent and unwary. Perhaps I was a little over-zealous; any way, I tried to do my whole duty. Then, in the moment of my weakness, that snake-in-the-grass inveigled me into his stronghold, or in other words, the bank, and pumped me dry. As I said before, I don't try to screen myself. I confided in him as in the friend of my bosom. But, Fred, you know I didn't mean to give you away. How could I know that he was such a sneak?"

Fred frowned angrily.

"I thought you knew enough to keep your tongue between your teeth," he said.

"Sorry, Fred—deuced sorry; but you know I wouldn't sell you out. And I have been honest about it. Made a clean breast of it, when I might have observed a judicious silence and saved my credit. You can't deny that."

"Oh, it's all right," said Fred. "Good-evening."

And he walked off with his hands in his pockets.

"Heigho!" sighed the "decoy," disconsolately. "Here's a pretty kettle of fish. Tiger Dick pays me to introduce a young gent, and then I let my infernal tongue dish the whole thing. Gads! he'll ship me, if he finds out what a confounded bungler I've been. Well, I've learned a lesson; I won't be as frank with him as with Fred."

He didn't know that he had been playing into Tiger Dick's hands in the best manner possible.

CHAPTER IV.

A DOUBLE PLOT.

SEVERAL days subsequent to the events narrated in the last chapter, Cecil Beaumont sat at his desk alone. There was the old look of weariness and despair on his face. His cheeks were pale and haggard.

He let his head drop upon his arm, the picture of dejection.

"Oh, curse it all!" he muttered, bitterly; "I wish I was dead. I am making a hell of my life—and for what?"

"All that I put into that infernal speculation only sinks the rest deeper. Luck is dead against me. Grain will never come up, until I get out of it. Well, I've played my last card. I dare not take any more. Detection may come any day—even to-morrow, and then the thing's all gone to smash. Well, I don't care. Any thing's better than this eternal worry."

"I'd emigrate some fine morning, but that human tiger watches me as a cat watches a mouse. Some of his infernal spies are at my elbow at every tack and turn. If he suspected as much as a thought of breaking faith with him, I might as well get measured for my coffin. He'd supply the rope and hangman. There's only one way of getting out of his clutches."

He shuddered, thinking of suicide as the only means of escape.

After a while he thrust the papers before him into his desk, and turning out the gas, left the bank.

In the comparative gloom, midway between two lamp-posts, and before some wholesale houses that were closed and dark, a paper was thrust into Cecil's hand. At the same moment a man brushed by him and passed on down the street at a rapid walk.

There were others passing and repassing; but this man had come so near as to nearly touch him; and, without stopping to look at the paper, Cecil resolved to follow him.

He had a satchel in his hand and a shawl thrown across his arm. He went directly to the depot, purchased a ticket, boarded the train, put his hat in the rack, and composed himself for slumber. The train moved off, and Cecil realized that he was "sold"—he had followed the wrong man.

Stepping into the waiting-room, Cecil unfolded the paper and read as follows:

"My dear Prince—I am dying to see you. Come without delay. I have the pins arranged for a ten-strike. This will be delivered by a messenger of the

GENTLE RICHARD."

Half an hour afterward, Cecil Beaumont, disguised as before, sat in the presence of Tiger Dick.

"Well, what's wanted?" he asked, looking straight before him, with his arms resting on the table.

"I've been thinking," said Tiger Dick, "that our little game ain't the surest thing in the world. We've got to wait too long for results. Now, the lady may die, or the old gent may decline to drop off the hooks. Either contingency would be disastrous to us. While we're waiting for dinner, we want something to stay our stomachs, eh?"

"We may want a great many things," replied Cecil, gloomily.

"How would you like from twenty-five to a hundred thousand dollars in your pocket, say this day week?" asked the Tiger, looking through the smoke of his cigar at Cecil.

The cashier looked up with a flash of interest.

"Where can you get that amount?" he asked, incredulously.

"What would you do for such a prize?" asked the Tiger.

"Sell my soul!" declared the cashier, with sudden vehemence.

"Hallo!" mused the Tiger, with a searching glance at the other. "What's the row, now?" Then, noticing that Cecil seemed embarrassed at his sudden outburst, he added, mentally: "Guess he showed his hand when he didn't mean to."

But he said aloud, with a laugh:

"Is it clear of incumbrance?"

"I guess the devil has a pretty heavy mortgage on both of us. But, to return to business: from off what bush are you going to pick twenty-five or a hundred thousand dollars?"

"Answer me a few questions, first. The gentle Freddy carries a key to the bank, does he not?"

"Yes."

"Who sleeps there nights?"

"The janitor."

"An old man?"

"Yes; but not an infant in muscle, for all that."

"Bother his muscle. That's of no account. Does anybody else ever sleep there?"

"I have a room there, which I occupy sometimes, when we are very busy."

"Hurrah!" cried the Tiger, almost leaping from his seat, in the enthusiasm with which he received the announcement. "By Jove! that's a trump card! Hold on, pard, don't deal any more until I put on my thinking-cap for a moment!"

He scratched his head and thought, eagerly; then he struck the table with his fist.

"Just the card!" he cried, exultingly.

"That simplifies the whole thing. Nothing would be thought of your occupying the room any night just now?"

"No. We are very busy just now, and next week we will have to make out our yearly statement."

"Dumped right at our door, by jingo! Oh! the devil helps his own, there's no mistake about it! Pard, where does that janitor sleep?"

"He has a sofa bedstead within ten feet of the vault."

"In plain sight of the strong box?"

"Yes."

"Pard, there's where that twenty-five or a hundred thousand dollars lies ready to our hand!"

Tiger Dick leaned across the table, and fastened his eyes upon Cecil's face. The cashier drew back with a sudden flush.

"Do you propose to rob the bank?" he asked, in a suppressed voice.

"Oh, no!" replied the Tiger, with a laugh.

"Only negotiating a loan, you know. But, have you any qualms of conscience?" he added, with a sneer.

"It's a bold game," replied Cecil, "and I have no particular ambition to break stone or peg shoes for the next ten or fifteen years."

"Are you afraid?" asked the Tiger, with a curling lip. "But, nothing will be required of you but to play the hero overpowered by numbers."

"And the janitor?"

"That's just the king pin of the whole plot. We couldn't dispense with him in any way. Here's our little game."

And while Cecil listened attentively, Tiger Dick unfolded the scheme in detail.

"Won't that hold water?" he asked, when he had concluded.

Cecil Beaumont sat with tightly-compressed lips, panting breath, and eyes whose flashing fire was hidden beneath their drooping lids. Here was an opportunity to cover up his defalcations beyond the chance of detection.

With the success of this plot, he would cast his most galling chain, and stand forth a comparatively free man. Yet he did not wish to seem to yield too readily.

"I confess that I have but little stomach for this kind of business," he said, with a frown, as of impatience.

"Look-a-here, pard," said the Tiger, in a measured tone. "Do you want to do a little neighborly kindness to the old who sports the black-eyed peri? Don't you see that his little set-to with the tiger, his signing his gov'nor's name to loose bits of paper, and his share in this little amusement, are all of a stripe, and will sink him lower than Tartarus? Ain't that just what we want? And if a few thousands come in incidentally, who's going to curse his luck on that account?"

Cecil Beaumont drew his breath hard through his set teeth, his nostrils quivered, and his eyes fairly blazed. The crimson tide surged up to his forehead, and then surged back to his heart, leaving his face livid with jealous hatred.

"I will do my part," he said, in a choking voice. "Appoint your time."

"Aha!" was the Tiger's mental reflection on the storm of passion he had awakened in the other. "That's a tender spot. But I hold a hand in that little game, too, as you'll find, some of these fine days."

He said aloud:

"I haven't made all my arrangements yet. I want to see the way clear first. I'll sound Billy Sanderson. I guess he's prime. He likes money, like the rest of us. And of late he appears to have something on his mind. If I might venture to guess, I'd say that he was in debt to Messrs. Brown & Thurlow, without their knowledge. If so, we've got him."

A flush came into Cecil's face, at the Tiger's suspicions, and he arose, saying:

"Well, if this is all, you can count on me as soon as you are ready—and the sooner the better."

Later in the evening, Tiger Dick and the "decoy duck" sat on opposite sides of the same little table in the Tiger's sanctum.

For half an hour the Tiger had been chatting and plying his subordinate with liquor. Now, considering him in proper condition, he broached the subject for which what had gone before was a preparation.

"Billy, you have no particular antipathy for the recognized medium of exchange?"

"Oh, hush, pard! Knock me down with some of the root!" replied Mr. Sanderson, with a pathetic cadence in his maudlin voice.

"Are you hard pressed, Billy?" asked the Tiger, with friendly interest.

"Pard, I'm just a-hanging on with teeth and toe-nails," replied the "decoy duck," in a confidential, almost pleading, tone.

"I guess I've got a little job for you, boss."

"Have you, my bosom friend? It's a straw to a drowning man, I assure you. If you can give me a lift now, I'll be your aunt Hannah for a twelvemonth—s'elp me Bob, I will!"

"Can you keep a close tongue in your head?" asked the Tiger.

"Pard, I'm as close as a bandbox!" asseverated Mr. Sanderson, stoutly, though he secretly winced, recollecting his recent lapse in that particular.

"How would you like a cool hundred?" asked the Tiger, carelessly.

"The deuce!" cried Billy, leaping to his feet, almost sobered by his astonishment and delight. A hundred dollars meant a great deal to him, just then.

"Sit down and take something to cool off on," said Dick, with a flash of triumph, pushing the decanter toward his excited companion.

Billy resumed his seat and tossed off the liquor hurriedly.

"What's trumps, pard?" he asked, looking inquiringly at the Tiger.

Tiger Dick drew a little volume from a drawer under the table, and slid it across to the "decoy duck."

"Do you know what that is?" he asked.

"The deuce!—the Bible!" exclaimed Billy, examining the book in bewilderment. "Queer kind of literature for this shop, ain't it, pard? or do you devote your leisure to its perusal?"

"Never you mind what I do with it. I have a use for it now. I want you to hold it in your hand and repeat some words after me."

"Hold on, pard. How do I know that you ain't going to make me swear away my patrimony for a mess of pottage, or come the Ku-Klux dodge on me, or something of that sort?"

"If we come to anything you don't want to stick to, you can stop and back out, any time. But remember there's a hundred dollars begging you to take charge of it."

"That's fair enough, by hoky! Deal away, pard—deal away."

"By this book which I hold in my hand," dictated the Tiger.

"By this book which I hold in my hand," repeated the "decoy."

"I do solemnly swear—"

"Never to reveal, by word of mouth, writing, look, sign, or in any other manner—"

"Never to reveal, by word of mouth, writing, look, sign, or in any other manner—"

"The proposition made to me this night, nor anything pertaining thereto."

"The proposition made to me this night, nor anything pertaining thereto."

"And I do solemnly swear that, if I accept the proposition—"

"And I do solemnly swear that, if I accept the proposition—"

"I will never, by word of mouth, writing, or in any other manner—"

"I will never, by word of mouth, writing, or in any other manner—"

"Confess my own act in pursuance thereof—"

"Confess my own act in pursuance thereof—"

"Nor in any way refer to anything that may flow, or may seem to flow from, or be connected with my act—"

"Nor in any way refer to anything that may flow, or may seem to flow from, or be connected with my act—"

"In such a manner as to throw suspicion upon any person or persons whom I may believe to be concerned in any transaction connected with my act—"

"Let up, pard. I can't crack that nut. Let's make the journey by short stages, over such rough ground," said Billy, breaking off.

Tiger Dick repeated it for him, phrase by phrase, and then continued:

"Nor in a manner calculated to awaken the suspicion that the facts are not such as they appear—"

"Nor in a manner calculated to awaken the suspicion that the facts are not such as they appear—"

"So help me God!"

"So help me God!"

"Now kiss the book."

Billy complied, laying it on the table with the remark:

"That's a tight one, old hoss. Gads! I won't be able to so much as lift an eye-winker, after this."

"I want it tight," replied the Tiger, grimly.

"And, my friend, here's another titbit for you to ruminate. If you ever break faith with me by so much as a breath, your life won't be worth a toss. In the Rocky Mountain country, men learned that Tiger Dick wasn't to be played with."

"No fear of me, Cap. Drive ahead. What do you want me to do?"

Tiger Dick explained to Billy Sanderson the part he wished him to play. When he was through, the "decoy duck" puckered up his face and said:

"I say, boss, wasn't that a big noise for the amount of damage done? From that trifle of an oath that you imposed on me, I thought you wanted me to massacre the President and his cabinet, and fetch off the Capitol in my breeches-pocket."

"Stow your thoughts. Do you accept the proposition?"

"For a hundred? Ho! Cap, you're joking. I wish I could get a hundred dollars for every act of mine that troubled my conscience more than that will. Accept? You bet!"

"All right. When you have accomplished your part, tie this bit of ribbon in your buttonhole, and walk from your room to the next corner and back. That's all I ask of you. When you get home, you'll find the hundred dollars where you won't have long to look for it."

(To be continued—commenced in No. 271.)

THE SECRET OF DRESS.—The great mistake made by many ladies is that of spending a large sum of money on one or two very handsome toilets, intended for dressy occasions, and by this means not only rendering these dresses so expensive that they are rarely worn, and then in "fear and trembling," thus becoming old-fashioned before half worn out, but at the same time so curtailing the sum set aside for toilet purposes that all the other articles of dress have to suffer. This is a mistake never made by the true Parisienne; she, on the contrary, pays particular attention to the dresses for everyday wear, and seen by every one, and thus, while spending far less, appears always well dressed, to the utter eclipse of those who do not happen to have on their "best dresses."

"WAITING."

BY FRANK H. CONVERSE.

Life's day-spring fades;
Its sunset calmly dying, throws
Around the twilight sweet repose
And tender shades.

A soul awaits the dawn
Of morning light that needs no glowing ray
Of coming stars to open up the day
Of life beyond.

It hides the Master's call
That echoes softly from the further side
Within its depths, across the mist-hid tide
Shall welcome fall.

Beside the open gates
Of that celestial city, where no sun or star
May vie with radiance purer, brighter, far—
An angel waits.

With whom the life-path here below was trod,
Till hers diverging—led her up to God—
Her life-work done.

Not long has she to wait;
His earthly cross shall soon be laid aside,
And light to guide him, shall at eventide
Shine through the open gate.

And then—but who has dared
To speak the fullness of perfected love—
That raised from earth to higher spheres above,
With Christ is shared.

RED ROB,

The Boy Road-Agent.

BY OLL COOMES.

AUTHOR OF "DAKOTA DAN," "BOWIE-KNIFE BEN," "OLD HURRICANE," "HAWKEYE HARRY," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE WILD RIDER.

DAKOTA DAN and his companions had come up with the rear guard of the outlaws when about half-way through the pass; and with one well-directed broadside tumbled three of the villains from their horses—the other two seeking safety in flight. Before firing upon them, however, the old ranger had assured himself of the fact that no captive was in their possession.

This attack would place the others on the defensive, and, being fully acquainted with the pass himself, Dan knew it would require some precaution to avert an ambushade. He trusted, however, to the superior instinct of Humility, and, passing over the three dead outlaws, they picked their way onward through the eternal gloom of the pass.

As they approached the valley without finding the enemy, the old ranger began to speculate over the possible movements of the outlaws. He soon arrived at a decision, which proved to be the correct one as to the position and intention of the foe, and at once ordered a halt, saying:

"We can't go another step till daylight, boys; tho' this may seem a cruel fact to you. The devils are in the valley concealed, coverin' the mouth of this pass with their rifles. We've got to wait for daylight, then mebbe we can execute a flank movement onto them. If we could only see how Humility here, and Patience thar, would do their part, and do it well; but then we can't, and so we'll have to wait."

This decision was a painful one to Boswell and St. Kenelm, but they accepted it without a murmur; though the long hours of night were passed in dire impatience.

The first evidence they received of the approach of day was the sight of a slender thread of light hundreds of feet above their heads.

Dakota Dan was in no hurry to be on the move. He waited until broad daylight had unfolded every object in the little valley from the shadows of night. As the sun gilded the distant mountain heights, he crept forward followed by his two companions. As they neared the mouth of the pass the light struggling in showed that all was clear before them. At length they debouched into the little valley, and to their surprise found it deserted by all except the outlaws' horses. This, however, convinced them that the villains were not far away—had secreted themselves in some niche or cave in the carpeted and fluted walls that hemmed in the little vale.

While the three stood carefully searching the valley before them for their enemies, a voice that seemed to come from the clouds shouted forth:

"Raise yer eyes, Dakota Dan, and you'll see what yer lookin' for!"

The trio lifted their eyes, and upon a sharp projecting ledge or table-rock, two hundred feet above them, beheld Missouri Moll standing, with Maggie Boswell at his side.

A cry of surprise and indignation burst from the lips of the men, and Humility growled fiercely:

"Plain and distinct the outlaw and his frail captive stood out against the rosy morn, he a demon, she an angel."

The shriek of an eagle perched on a cliff high up in the clouds, and the soft chirp of a bluebird in the valley were fit accompaniments to the two spirits on the rock.

Three rifles were raised simultaneously to shoot the desperado down, but he interposed the body of the trembling Maggie between him and danger, and then shouted:

"Shoot if you'd complete what I've begun."

"Don't fire, for God's sake!" moaned St. Kenelm, lowering his own rifle.

Dan and Boswell obeyed the lover's request. Then the old ranger scanned the rock for some place where he might be able to ascend the rock, but the wall was perpendicular. He could do nothing, and he dare not venture further into the valley for fear his body would become the focus for half a dozen concealed rifles.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the demon on the cliff. "I dare you to shoot!"

"It'll be too easy a death for you, monster," replied Dan, his bearded face assuming a look of intense pain. "I want that pup to chaw yer throat till yer life leaks 'out little by little."

"You can talk now," responded the desperado, "but I defy you and the men you have back in that pass."

"That's good," said Dan, in a low tone. "He thinks thar's more of us back in the canyon, but let him think so, and directly I'll swing old Mortality into posish and send a bullet plumb-center through his brain afore he's time to creep behind the gal."

"Be careful, Dan, for her sake," continued St. Kenelm, whose heart could no longer conceal its emotions of love for her so near, and yet so far away beyond their assistance.

Maggie was standing on the edge of the dizzy height, her head bowed, her arms hanging at length and her hands clasped together. Her pale face looked serene in its sadness, and to St. Kenelm, never so sweet and angelic as now.

"Thar's no way to flank the 'tarnal varmint," said Dan, after a moment's reflection, "else I'd send Humility, my dog thar, up to throttle the big, cowardly sneak."

"Where do you suppose his men are?" asked Boswell.

"Three of them's back in the pass," replied Dan, facetiously, "and I'll venture to assert the others are guardin' the way by which he got up thar, or else they are hid back behind him under them rocks."

"Why don't you shoot?" suddenly yelled out the desperado, from above; "I'm ready."

"You be, be you? You're durned brave now, ar'n't ye? Skulk behind a gal, can't ye? You'll make another boy drink likker, won't ye?" returned Dan, with all the sarcasm he could throw into the words.

"Ho, ho!" retorted the outlaw, "vengeance is sweet. Here I can defy you all, and the moment a man of you fires a shot, I will give you what you seek—I will hurl this girl down to you, as true as there is a God!"

The brother and lover groaned in spirit.

"You're a brave critter, ar'n't you? What did that gal do to you?" responded Dan.

"Do you see that?" asked the desperado, laying his forefinger on a livid scar that extended across his cheek.

"Yes; pity the knife that made it didn't find yer heart," the old ranger shouted back.

"Either your knife, or that of the man who stands at your side, made that scar in the Conejos saloon," continued Missouri Moll. "I swore then I'd have revenge, even if you were backed by a legion of devils, and I will too. The two girls' captivity is but a foretaste of what's to follow. Besides, you've not the road-agents to aid and abet you as they did at Conejos. Your friend, Red Rob, will not be so handy next time. He'll not dance with yer gals soon again, for they are my gals now."

"I can't see what all that's got to do with that scar on yer face, and that bigger one on yer soul. Away up yander, Missouri Moll," said the ranger, lifting his hand warningly toward heaven, "is a God in whose eyes you are a smaller speck of insignificance than in mine. He'll settle accounts with you, man, and send you below where Satan is already punchin' up the fire in anticipation of your comin'." The horn of Gabriels will soon proclaim the judgment morn in your ears."

The old ranger's words seemed strangely prophetic, for scarcely had they died upon the clear, vibrant air, ere the shrill clangor of a horn came thrilling down from amid the gray mist of morning clouds, gathering volume as it advanced—bounding and rebounding from mountain side to side, and rushing away through the shadowy gorges awaking a thousand slumbering echoes.

Her friends started with amazement; the outlaw's face was aglazed with terror.

All lifted their eyes upward.

A cry burst from every lip, now pale and trembling.

Down from amid the clouds, along the mountain side where it seemed impossible for the foot of man to have picked its way with safety, came a horseman at a wild, breakneck speed. His head was bare, his hair flying in the wind. Neither saddle nor bridle hampered the chamois-like movement of the gallant steed, from whose nostrils the hot breath poured in almost fiery currents, and whose smoking flanks were covered with frosty foam. The ring of the iron-shod hoofs could be distinctly heard upon the stony mountain side, and with every footstroke fire seemed to burst in jets from the rocks.

"My God!" exclaimed St. Kenelm, "who is it—what madman thus riding into eternity?"

No one answered, for no one knew. A cry of astonishment burst from Dakota Dan's lips, Patience pricked up her ears and whinnied, and Humility barked.

Still on comes the mad, reckless rider, straight down the dangerous mountain side. He will soon reach the table rock upon which the outlaw and maiden stand—and then, no power on earth can save him from plunging over the cliff into the valley, hundreds of feet below. The movements of the fabled steed Pegasus could not have been more swift, his footsteps more unerring among the clouds, than that of the animal now flying down the mountain side; nor his rider less daring than the gallant young Bellerophon as he dashed on to the conquest of the dread Chimera.

There was a kind of a horrible fascination in the awful scene, and the three men in the valley, and the outlaw on the cliff forgot all else and watched the wild horseman galloping down into the awful abyss.

As he drew nearer and nearer the ledge, the flushed face of the rider began to assume a look of familiarity; an exclamation burst from St. Kenelm's lips:

"Red Rob!"

"Red Rob!" repeated Boswell.

"Red Rob, the Boy Road-Agent!" added Dakota Dan, with a nervous start.

CHAPTER XXV.

RED ROB IN BONDS.

WHEN they recognized the face of Red Rob rushing on into a fearful death, Dakota Dan and his two companions turned aside to shut out the horrible sight so soon to come. Their hearts almost ceased to beat—their very souls sickened with horror in anticipation of beholding that awful crushing sound.

Aside from the ring of the horse's hoofs a pistol-shot rung out from the cliff above; an awful cry of human agony followed.

Our friends lifted their eyes upward, and a cry of astonishment burst from their lips.

They saw Missouri Moll stagger backward and fall. They saw Red Rob check the speed of his animal and come to a sudden halt at Maggie's side on the very brink of destruction. They saw the young outlaw lift the terrified girl to a seat before him; and then go bounding away up the mountain side, his Pegasus steed bounding from terrace to terrace with all the swiftness and accuracy of footstep of the mountain goat.

The three men witnessed the whole with a sort of a vague, horrible suspense.

Dakota Dan raised his rifle to fire, but St. Kenelm prevented his deadly purpose.

"Do not fire on him, Dan," the young man said; "robber though he be, he's too brave—to noble to die—but look yonder! There are Missouri Moll's friends!"

True enough, the sudden turn of affairs had brought the outlaw's friends from their concealment, and with all their speed scaled the mountain side in pursuit of the reckless boy outlaw.

The form of Missouri Moll could be seen hanging half-over the edge of the cliff, his life-blood trickling from a wound in the heart.

Prophetic indeed had been Dakota Dan's words. In less than a minute from the time of their utterance, the spirit of the desperado had gone to the judgment.

A halt was ordered and a scout sent forward to reconnoiter. He soon returned with the intelligence that a single white man was encamped in the woods by the fire.

The chief selected five warriors from the party and sent them forward to capture the unknown intruder.

With the silence of phantoms, the warriors crept stealthily forward through the gloom. They soon came in sight of the camp, but to their surprise and disappointment the man was gone. But that his absence was only temporary, was evident from one fact: his horse remained hitched near the fire, and seemed oblivious to all earthly things save the sweet enjoyment of a sound slumber.

The savages remained concealed nearly an hour, waiting the return of the man; but to their regret he came not. A hasty consultation was held, which drew out the belief that the enemy had got wind of their approach and feeling far more safe in trusting to his own legs than those of his antiquated-looking old horse, he had left it behind.

With all that caution with which a wolf feels its way toward a carcass not visited before, the savages crept from their concealment and approached the camp-fire.

The old horse opened its eyes and kicked out viciously at the open air, as though it had been awakened from a dream.

The savages laughed at this sudden demonstration of the slumbering beast.

The red-skins forgot all else in their desire for savage sport, and one of them crept softly up and pricked the old horse with the keen point of his knife. But quicker than a flash of lightning, the animal whirled and planted its heels in the Indian's stomach, sending his body in the air, and his spirit to the happy hunting-grounds.

This put a sudden termination to the fun, and a goodly distance between them and the deadly heels of the treacherous old horse. A messenger was dispatched for the main column which soon came up.

Octavia could scarcely repress a cry of surprise when her eyes fell upon the old horse hitched within the full glow of the camp-fire.

It was old Patience, the mare of Dakota Dan, the ranger. But where was the ranger himself? Was he near—or had the mare been stolen from the corral at the Hidden Home?

Pierce and deadly were the scowls that clouded the savages' brows, as they turned their eyes from the dead comrade upon whose naked breast was the vivid imprint of two hoof-marks, to the old mare drowsing unconcernedly by the camp-fire.

Not a savage would now venture within reach of her, but long poles and switches were out, with which the resolute red-men began to "whale" the dormant tiger-temper out of the old anatomy, with the view of substituting her for the litter when once subdued.

Octavia saw the cruel intention of her captors, and, springing to her feet, she ran up to the old mare and began caressing her in a manner that seemed perfectly congenial to her—the animal's feminine sensibilities. The animal seemed to her master, and her docility toward the maiden was but the evidence of remarkable animal instinct.

Patience had become quite an object of admiration and curiosity in the camp of the settlers. All had bestowed some kindness upon her—had petted and fed her and indulged her in her peculiar, wonderful sagacity, or "female gumpshin" as old Dan would have it. Octavia had ridden her, fed her and caressed her so often that the mare finally regarded her with as much respect and the same obedience as her master.

The maiden's heart had grown strong with hope since their arrival at the camp-fire. The presence of the old mare was evidence to her that Dan was not far away, and perhaps others of her friends were with him. But why the ranger had left his mare and come off, she could not form the slightest conception. She inwardly hoped and prayed that nothing had befallen him.

The savages seemed to regard the animal's friendliness toward the maiden with some curiosity and doubt; but as none of them could speak English, they could elicit no information by questioning. So far, the conversation between captive and captors had been carried on by signs and gestures. At length, however, a warrior ventured to approach the animal. She made no offer of violence, and so the worst trouble was overcome and the mare was at once unhitched.

The chief of the party, a large fleshy fellow, arranged a cushion of several thicknesses of blankets on the animal's back, and upon this, arranged his own two hundred pounds of adipose tissue, determined to make the rest of the journey in ease and comfort. Octavia was also given a seat upon the group behind the savage dignitary, and then the procession moved triumphantly forward, the dead warrior taking the maiden's place on the litter.

Patience yielded to savage authority with humble resignation, and ambled slowly away through the gloomy woods, with the sullen savage rocking from side to side, and the fair captive weeping, more despondent than ever.

Octavia was satisfied that they were nearing the Indian village, or else her captors would have gone into camp at nightfall; and her fears now began to assume proportions entirely beyond the possibility of hope. Once within the Indian stronghold, she knew all chances of escape would be cut off.

While brooding over her sad and bitter fate, a low, prolonged, whistling sound suddenly stole through the night. Patience pricked up her ears in an instant, deliberately took the bit between her teeth, and like a deer shot away through the woods, with her double burden.

The savage, rocking and bouncing more violently than ever, exerted his utmost strength to check the animal's flight, while Octavia clung to the red-skin with that desperation born of sudden terror. But the chief's efforts were as futile as a child's. Patience plunged on through the woods, her course apparently directed by that peculiar whistle still pulsing through the air.

But the chief was too deeply absorbed in his efforts to keep his equilibrium and gain control of the mare, to hear that whistle, else he might have been less reluctant to vacate his cushioned seat. But to give up a victory already within his grasp, would have been to call down upon his distinguished head a shower of derision from his followers, and so to preserve the dignity of his position, he held on to the reins and Patience held on to the bit.

Suddenly the mare dashed into an open, moonlit glade and came to a dead halt.

"Down, red-skin; it's my turn to ride," said a voice, accompanied with the click of a gunlock and the growl of a dog.

Dakota Dan, with a leveled rifle, confronted the chief!

A cry of joy burst from Octavia's lips and she leaped to the ground.

And a cry of rage burst from the savages' lips. Seeing his danger, the chief fled from

Patience's back on the opposite side and attempted to flee. But Humility was ready for his part in the drama, and springing forward, seized the Arapaho as he fled, midway between the nape of the neck and the heels, causing him to howl and dance on tiptoe in a gingerly manner.

Dan turned to Octavia, but a yell of the approaching warriors would not admit of delay or explanations then between the rescuer and the rescued; and assisting the maiden to a seat on Patience's back again, the ranger beat a hasty retreat, calling Humility away from the unlucky chief, who was spinning around like a top in vain endeavors to get behind himself and choke off the dog.

The escape was not made a moment too soon. They were barely under cover of the woods ere the warriors burst into the glade on the opposite side.

For some time Dan led the way rapidly through the woods, speaking never a word. But as soon as he had assured himself that they were out of immediate danger, he stopped short and said:

"Safe, aren't you, little one?"

"I feel so, at least," replied the overjoyed maiden, "under your protection, Dan."

"Bless my soul, if that don't make me feel good!" the ranger exclaimed, as if to himself. "But, smoke of Jerusalem!" he continued, "didn't old Patience, my mare here, play her part well? She war a pestilence to that red-skin that essayed to prod her with his knife. I war deposited 'war I could see all. And I war mortal afraid she wouldn't give up at all, and if it hadn't been for you she wouldn't. I wanted things to turn out just as they did. I've had my eye on 'em all afternoon, and see'd 'em totin' you along on that litter, and says I to Humility, 'They'd like a hoss to put her on,' and Humility barked, and then I know'd he thought so, too, and so I circled 'round and got in ahead of you, and fixed up the game onto 'em. Patience is a splendid kicker, ain't she? Lord! it'd 'a' done your soul good to 'a' see'd her flip that red-skin over Jordan to the happy huntin' ground! And I'll bet she crept away right smartly with you and that red-skin when she heard my whistle. Humph! greased lightning's nowher' with her, Octavia. And then come to the finishin' touches, Humility, than, displayed his activity and put in a tooth, he he! he! I'll bet that red-skin don't sit down squallin' again for a solid year."

"My escape seems miraculous, since I have little more to think the whole matter over, Dan," Octavia said, in praise of the old ranger's daring stratagem.

"It's nothin' much after one gets used to it, little one. The great Triangle has done some wonderful things since it began to operate. We've washed the soil of every territory in the West with our blood, and propose to keep right on till the great Master of life bids us cease our labors."

"Dan, do you know what has become of Maggie Boswell?" Octavia asked, as her mind recurred to her beloved young friend.

"Yes, my little gal, I do that. She's safe as a dollar in a Dutchman's pocket, at Hidden Home."

"Oh, thank Heaven!" murmured the maiden, joyfully.

"And who do you think saved her?" questioned the old ranger.

"I daresay, my friend and rescuer, Dakota Dan."

"Wrong," replied Dan, as if flattered by her guess; "a chap once who, for pure, unadulterated devilishness and harem-skarem, rip-and-thunder recklessness, aren't this side of the grave, and his name is Red Rob, the Boy Road-Agent."

"Red Rob?" repeated Octavia, as if she doubted the evidence of her hearing.

"Yes, Red Rob; but the boy's a prisoner now. The sifers come a-robbin'-huntin' up from Fort Wingate, and kaptured him. And I expect it'll go hard with him, too, for sifers has got little mercy for sifers fellers. He war to be tried, and if found guilty, as in course he will be, he war to be shot."

A groan burst from Octavia's lips, and a cloud far more gloomy than the night, overshadowed her heart.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 266.)

Overland Kit:

THE IDYL OF WHITE PINE.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.

AUTHOR OF "WITCHES OF NEW YORK," "WOLF DEMON," "WHITE WITCH," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXVII.

JINNIE SPEAKS.

TALBOT'S friends insisted upon adjourning to the Eldorado and celebrating his release. Despite his wishes, for there was a heavy weight upon his heart, and he felt more like seeking solitude than mingling with a boisterous crowd, Dick was forced to accompany the crowd.

Upon entering the saloon, Bill noticed that Jinjie was missing.

"What's the leetle woman, heathen?" he asked of the Chinese.

"She's plenty sick," replied the sagacious Ah Ling, pointing upward. Bill understood by this that Jinjie had gone to bed.

"She's a plucky little woman," he said, confidentially, to the Man-from-Red-Dog, "but, of course, she ain't any more than human. I reckon she thinks a heap of Dick, now."

Talbot excused himself as soon as possible, under plea that he needed rest after the excitement of the day; and withdrew from the saloon.

Upstairs in her room sat Bernice and the old lawyer. On arriving at Bernice's apartment, Rennet noticed how pale and sick the young girl looked.

"Why, what is the matter, my dear?" the lawyer asked, in alarm.

"I am not well," Bernice answered, slowly and sadly.

"Yes, my dear, I can see that plainly enough. Your face betrays that you are not well. I suppose the excitement of the trial, etc., has been too much for you."

"Yes," Bernice replied, absently, her eyes fixed on vacancy.

"You'll be all right to-morrow."

"Yes."

Rennet was puzzled. He had known Bernice from childhood, but had never seen her in such a state before. Her whole nature seemed oppressed by some deep grief.

"Mr. Rennet, I think we had better return to New York soon," Bernice said, suddenly.

The old lawyer stared at the young girl in astonishment. During his life he had got pretty well accustomed to woman's whims, but this sudden determination of Bernice rather amazed him.

"But, my dear, you said, only a few hours ago, that you had spoken with your cousin, Patrick Gwyne, and that—"

"Patrick Gwyne is the outlaw, Overland Kit," interrupted Bernice.

"Yes, so you said, but how can you be sure that he is?"

"Why, he told me so."

"Yes, but did he present any proofs that he is the person that he represents himself to be? Did you recognize him?"

"No, I did not," Bernice said, thoughtfully, her mind reverting back to her interview with the outlaw.

"Well, then, his declaration amounts to nothing," Rennet exclaimed. "By some means he may have learned all the particulars regarding your search for your cousin, and for some unknown purpose of his own he personates the character of Patrick Gwyne."

"Mr. Rennet, I was sure that Mr. Talbot was the outlaw," Overland Kit, and that he was my cousin, Patrick Gwyne," Bernice exclaimed, abruptly.

"My dear, how could you possibly think such a thing?" cried the lawyer. "Why, it was clear to my mind, from the first, that Talbot could not by any possibility be the road-agent, and I had no doubt that he would be acquitted of the charge, although I did not expect such overwhelming proof as the appearance of the outlaw in person. Mind you, I think Talbot expected his appearance, for it was at his urgent request that I fought to have the trial postponed until six o'clock; and he particularly requested me to occupy all the time that I could in the examination of the witnesses. He said that he could not give me his reasons for this strange manner of proceeding, but he assured me that he had good and sufficient ones. And, as the darkness came on, and they lighted the torches, he told me in a whisper that time enough had been occupied, and to hurry matters forward all that I could. Now that the whole affair is over, I am convinced that he is, in some way, connected with the road-agent."

"Oh! I don't know what to think! I am in a maze!" Bernice exclaimed.

"Better go right to bed, my dear; you'll feel better in the morning." And after giving this advice, the old lawyer left the room, leaving Bernice alone, a prey to her own sad thoughts.

"Will I ever learn the truth?" the young girl cried, in anguish. "Now I am like one wandering in a fog. I do not know which way to turn."

Bernice arose and paced up and down the little room restlessly, her features sad with anxious thoughts.

"Yesterday I felt so sure that I had discovered the truth; but now, to-day, I am more in the dark than ever."

A slight tap at the door attracted Bernice's attention.

"Come in," she said.

The door opened, and Jinjie appeared. A hectic flush burned in her brown cheeks, and the red circles around her eyes told that she had been weeping.

For a moment the two girls looked at each other—a looker-on each other's strength.

"I beg your pardon for intruding, Miss," Jinjie said, a mournful cadence in her usually clear, ringing voice.

"A pardon is not necessary," Bernice replied, a cold constraint in her tone and manner; in spite of her efforts to appear unconcerned. "What do you wish?"

"I want to ask you a question," Jinjie said, hesitating.

"A question? Well, what is it?"

"Will you answer it?" Jinjie asked, eagerly.

"Will I answer it?" Bernice said, thoughtfully. "Is it an unpleasant question, then, that you have a doubt as to my answering it?"

"Yes, it is," cried Jinjie, abruptly. "Miss, you and I ain't friends. We can't be friends. There's something between us that won't let us be friends. It isn't that you're a lady, and that I'm only a poor, rough girl. There's something more than that. You know what it is, as well as I do. Perhaps you wouldn't speak out so plain; but I can't help it. It's my nature, and the nature that Heaven has given us, ain't of any use to try and keep down as long as it don't lead us into evil."

"If we are not friends, we are not enemies, Jinjie," Bernice said, softly, speaking the girl's name for the first time.

"Don't speak that way, please, Miss," Jinjie exclaimed, tears glittering in her bright eyes. "When you speak like that you take all the courage out of me. I didn't come here to be spoken kindly to. I came to talk bitter, to hate, to fight you—just like the men fight—if you don't give up what belongs to me. But when you speak soft it takes my anger all away. Jinjie's lips quivered convulsively, and she strove, but in vain, to keep back the big tear-drops that were forming in her keen eyes.

"I will be as frank with you as you are with me," Bernice said, after a moment's thought. "What have I striven to take that belongs to you?"

"The love of Dick Talbot," Jinjie answered, with broken accents.

"His love," murmured Bernice, and a burning blush swept over her pale cheeks.

"Yes, it belongs to me. Three years ago I jumped into the Reese, when it was coming down, bank full, in the springtime, and pulled Dick out by the hair of the head, when the cakes of ice and the broken timber were crushing him down under the icy water. And after I got him to the bank, and brought him to sense again, he put his arm around my waist, kissed away the big drops of water that were running down my face, said that I had saved his life, and that life belonged to me, and that I might have it whenever I wanted it. I never really wanted it till now, when I see that somebody else wants it. I don't go to him, but I come to you to ask you not to take away the life that is mine. You're a nice lady, with plenty of money, East, and plenty of friends, too, I suppose. Now, I've only got one friend in all the wide world, and I come to ask you not to take that friend away from me."

"You love him?" Bernice said, sadly.

"Yes," replied Jinjie, quickly, "better than you do; better than anybody can in this world. He's all to me—father, brother—"

"And husband?" questioned Bernice, as Jinjie paused.

Jinnie's brown face colored up, and a soft look came into her bright eyes.

"Yes, maybe, if you'll only go away and live with me, and that life belonged to me, and that I might have it whenever I wanted it. I never really wanted it till now, when I see that somebody else wants it. I don't go to him, but I come to you to ask you not to take away the life that is mine. You're a nice lady, with plenty of money, East, and plenty of friends, too, I suppose. Now, I've only got one friend in all the wide world, and I come to ask you not to take that friend away from me."

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"Yes," replied Jinjie, quickly, "better than you do; better than anybody can in this world. He's all to me—father, brother—"

"And husband?" questioned Bernice, as Jinjie paused.

Jinnie's brown face colored up, and a soft look came into her bright eyes.

"Yes, maybe, if you'll only go away and live with me, and that life belonged to me, and that I might have it whenever I wanted it. I never really wanted it till now, when I see that somebody else wants it. I don't go to him, but I come to you to ask you not to take away the life that is mine. You're a nice lady, with plenty of money, East, and plenty of friends, too, I suppose. Now, I've only got one friend in all the wide world, and I come to ask you not to take that friend away from me."

"You love him?" Bernice said, sadly.

"Yes," replied Jinjie, quickly, "better than you do; better than anybody can in this world. He's all to me—father, brother—"

"And husband?" questioned Bernice, as Jinjie paused.

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"I didn't say so," Jinjie replied.

"True; but I am sure that I am right."

"Do you love Dick?" asked Jinjie, suddenly, fixing her keen eyes on the face of Bernice as she spoke.

Bernice was troubled at the abrupt question; a hot flush swept over her face for an instant.

"Do you think that I love him?" she asked, evading the question.

"I know you do," replied Jinjie, promptly.

"You know—do you mean that you guess that I do," Bernice said, quietly.

"No; I don't mean any such thing!" the girl exclaimed. "I know it. I can see it in your face. I saw it that night when you looked out of the window. You see I speak right out. I am not ashamed to say that I love him; I'd say it before all the world, and it ain't fair for you to come here and take him away from me. I'd do anything in the world for him—die for him; would you?"

Bernice did not reply; a sad look came over her beautiful face, and she bent her eyes upon the ground.

Jinnie watched the face of her rival anxiously.

"You don't answer. You ain't as honest as I am," Jinjie said, a mournful tone in her voice. "You try to steal a man's love away, and yet you don't dare to confess that you love him."

"You are wrong; I have not tried to steal your lover away from you," Bernice said, slowly.

"He ain't my lover, and that's what's the matter!" Jinjie replied, quickly, her lips quivering and the tear-drops stealing into her eyes. "If he had ever told me that he loved me, I wouldn't be afraid of your stealing him away, or any other woman in the world. Dick's too true for that. If he had given his word, he'd stick to it."

"But of what value is this man to you if he loves another woman?" asked Bernice.

"He don't love you!" cried Jinjie, indignantly. "If it was a fair struggle between us, I wouldn't say a word, but it isn't. If you could take him away from me fairly, that would be all right; but you have bewitched him. The moment he set eyes on you, he seemed like a man in a dream, and Dick Talbot isn't a man that dreams when he is awake."

"What do you want me to do?" demanded Bernice, in a clear, calm voice.

"Leave Dick to me, and go away from here; go where you belong; you can find plenty to love and I can't. There's only one man in the world that I care for, or shall ever care for, and you've no business to come here and try to take him away from me."

"How do you know that I have tried?"

"Hain't I got eyes?" asked Jinjie, quickly; "can't I see? If you wasn't here, Dick would love me. He told me once that his life belonged to me, and that I could have it whenever I wanted it."

"Do you think that he will break that promise?"

"He can't help himself; you have bewitched him!" cried Jinjie, in sorrowful indignation. "If I should go to him and tell him that I was ready to take the life that he had said was mine whenever I wanted it, how could he give it to me, if you've stolen it? He might try to do it, try to keep his promise, but I don't want a man who has given his heart to another woman. I want his heart all to myself."

With a troubled face, Bernice listened to the passionate outburst of the girl.

"You wish me then to go away?" she asked.

"Yes," Jinjie replied, quickly.

"But, one thing you have not thought of."

"What is that?" Jinjie asked, not exactly understanding Bernice's meaning.

"You claim that this man's love is yours by right?"

"Yes," Jinjie said, firmly.

"Haven't I told you once already? I loved him before he ever saw you."

"Are you sure of that?" Bernice asked, meaningly.

Jinnie cast an anxious glance in the face of the other. There was a confident tone in Bernice's voice that struck terror to Jinjie's soul.

"You say that you have a prior claim to his heart," Bernice continued, "but are you sure of it? How can you tell but that he and I have met years ago. It is possible that I am the first love and you the second."

"No, it isn't!" cried Jinjie, quickly.

"What proof have you of that?" asked Bernice, somewhat astonished at the confident assertion of the girl.

"The best proof in all the world, Dick's own words," replied Jinjie. "When you first came, I had an idea that you were some old sweetheart of his, or maybe, that you were his wife; so I asked Dick to tell me the truth, right away."

"And did he?" asked Bernice, a strange expression upon her face.

"Yes, he said that he had never seen you before!" There was just a little bit of triumph in Jinjie's voice as she spoke.

Bernice was perplexed. The mystery was getting deeper and deeper; no ray of light illumined the darkness.

"You demand, then, that I shall give this man up, even if he loves me and I love him?"

"You can't love him one-half as well as I!" cried Jinjie, quite fiercely. "It isn't in your nature. You wouldn't have jumped into the river and pulled him out by the hair of the head as I did. You ain't ready to lay down your life for him any day, as I am. You never held him in your arms and he just as cold and still as a piece of ice; you never kissed his chilly, white lips back to life, or felt the hot tears rolling down your cheeks, thinking that he was dead and lost to you forever. I have! He belongs to me and it's cruel and cowardly for you to come and try to take him away from me."

"Is he not the best person to decide the question? Whether I love him or not, if he loves you, I should not attempt to take him from you," Bernice said, slowly.

"But you bewitch him!" cried Jinjie, in despair. "He's not the same man when you are around that he is at other times. If it wasn't for that, I wouldn't ask any odds. I've got as much pride as any other girl. I wouldn't want a man to love me who loved somebody else. I wouldn't try for him, but I don't stand any show with you; your game ain't fair. I didn't take any advantage of Dick. He knew what he was doing when he said that his life belonged to me; he wasn't enured to saying it; he wasn't a bit excited. We stood on the rocks by the bank of the river, both of us wet through, not a dry stitch of clothes on us, and the water dropping down our faces and from our hair, just as we had come out of the river. He caught me up in his arms and pressed me right tight to his breast, then kissed my lips with such a kiss; it made the blood dance all through my veins just like fire along a dry stick. I shut my eyes and leaned my

head on his shoulder. I didn't feel a bit cold then; but I didn't even feel the wet clothes that clung all around me; all that I felt was his kiss on my lips. I was so happy that I could hardly breathe. It was the first time, Miss, that I ever knew the meaning of the word, love; and he taught it to me. He didn't ask me to be his wife, but I knew that he meant that I should be some day, although he didn't say so. I was only a child then—it was about two years ago, father was alive, and I lived with him, in a little shanty up the Reese. After that time, Dick used to come and see me every day; he bought me books and used to teach me, but there was one thing I had already learned, and it came without study; that was to love him. Father used to like to have Dick come, because he could play cards with him. Father used to always win from Dick, and he couldn't play worth a cent, but Dick let him win on purpose. I believe that both father and I would have starved if it hadn't been for Dick. He made a big difference with me, too. I used to go round without caring how I looked, but after that night by the Reese, I took care

BIRDLINGS.

BY FRANK M. IMBRIE.

In Fancy's studio one bright nook
Is lit by a picture rare and sweet—
True limned, with cunning imagery,
From the curl-tossed head to the restless feet.
Two upturned eyes, all wonder-bright,
By pristine fires of genius fed;
Two scarlet lips tell the quaint words:
"Have the birdies gone up-stairs to bed?"

Doubtless, with infant ken it went
Step by step the starlit stair;
And saw the wee cloud-hammock fling
Its rose-tinged curtains on the air;
Then, when some dappled, dainty cloud
Went eddying across the sapphire dome,
It seemed the mamma-bird had met
Her nestlings in their sky-girt home.

Where night's sweet zephyrs, song-filled breeze,
Ah, they surely were there lullaby!
The star eyes looking softly down
Were the baby birds so cunning, shy.
Peering through misty drapery
Till a kindred gleam in the child-eyes shone
As the infant querist drifted off,
To visit, in dreams, this vision-home.

Dear child-teachers! what thoughts they wake:
What yearnings for our own child life,
When we wandered, in fancy, through labyrinths
With birdcalls, stars and flowers rife!
Oh, touch again some old-time strain;
Some memory-gen, without alloy!
Prison our earth-clasped hearts awhile
Till we catch one note of vanished joy!

A Model Mother-in-Law.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

MRS. SYMES SYMINGTON smoothed down the nap of her jetty velvet polonaise with her pretty, white, plump hand, on the forefinger of which sparkled a cluster diamond ring, on the third finger of which hung a plain, heavy marriage-ring.

She was a plump, rosy little lady, not a tall by a head as the handsome young fellow who called her "mother," and in whom her whole heart's affections were centered, and to whom she was, at this present moment, administering as severe a reproof as she ever had found occasion to do.

Naughty, headstrong Cleve listened very respectfully, as he leaned his head on his hand and his elbow on the mantelpiece; listened with an air that demonstrated the perfect uselessness of the arguments his lady-mother advanced.

Then, when she paused in triumphant breathlessness—breathless because of her long sentences with no punctuation marks, and triumphant, because she certainly accepted Cleve's silence as the consent she aspired to securing; after all this, Cleve smiled—so sweetly, so coolly, right in her face.

"But I shall marry little Birdie Lorne, mamma mine—that is, if she will have me. Now, don't frown so—you look so much prettier when you smile and blush, little mother. Tell me to propose to my little sunny-haired girl and bring her here for the maternal blessing."

He leaned his handsome head toward Mrs. Symington, and looked at her in such a proudly coaxing way that in her fond heart she wondered how any woman could resist him. Then—shook her head until the diamonds in her ears sent their coruscations far and near.

"How can I, Cleve, when I am morally sure Miss Lorne wants your money? A hundred thousand dollars isn't to be secured every day; and to marry for money is to be perfectly miserable."

I married for money, Cleve, and you know the life I led until your father died. You are my only comfort—don't hurt me by bringing home a wife who will only endure us for the sake of what we can give her."

Evidently she had forgotten her mental decision that no girl with a human heart could resist her boy's handsome face; and certainly it was very unlike the proud, self-assured Mrs. Symes Symington to underrate her own importance so tremendously. But then, even the richest, proudest, haughtiest people have their "other side" that only a few friends know; and this was Mrs. Symington's "other side."

She watched Cleve's face anxiously, but there was no sign of change of views in the gay, debonair face, with the contradicting eyes so grave and sternly decided.

"You mistake Birdie altogether, mother dear. How can it be possible she wants me for my money when lots of other fellows are after her? She is quite as handsome in her own right—forty or fifty thousand."

Mrs. Symington opened her bright, black eyes.

"O-h! is that the case? Well—"

Her altered tone, her hesitating words, so delightfully emphasized, were enough for Cleve. He caught her up in his arms, regardless of her elegant toilet, and kissed her until her face was as scarlet as a girl's.

"Cleve! aren't you ashamed of yourself! Put me down, this minute, or—or—you shan't marry Birdie!"

He dropped her like a hot potato.

"You're down, mother! and in just one hour prepare to see my little darling—all blushing, and dimples, and smiles, and sweetness."

He went out rather hurriedly, caught his hat from the rack and hailed a passing car that would speed him on his mission.

Mrs. Symington watched him between the plum-colored damask curtains, her eyes kindling with pleasurable, pardonable pride.

"The dear boy! he wants me to think I settled the matter he arranged long ago! Of course he would have married her, anyway, but just to think how splendidly he has behaved to me!"

And something very like the diamonds in her ears glittered in her fond mother eyes as she turned away.

A delightful little octagonal room, hung with the exact shade of dainty pink silk that was most becoming to Birdie Lorne's fair complexion; a pink carpet that covered the floor in an unbroken expanse of velvet; divans, chairs, ottomans and cushions upholstered in pink and ebony; with little lace tidies, and snowy, zephyr mats scattered gracefully around; with elegantly-designed and executed affigians on the ottomans and sofas; with lace curtains and pink satin drapery; with the white walls hung with small, rare paintings, with statuettes on pedestals in every available niche.

A charming, girlishly-ordered room, that opened from the back drawing-room by one door and into the conservatory by another; a place where tears and trouble ought never to have come, and the sight of both of which uncanny visitants made Cleve Symington pause a second on the threshold, as he caught a glimpse of a snowy head buried in two tiny fair hands, and heard the unmistakable sobs that shook the little white-robed figure crouching in a heap beside a low hassock.

He only hesitated a second, then, with a look of tenderest love and pity and sympathy, crossed the room to her side.

"Birdie! not crying so piteously! Can I sympathize or do I intrude?"

She sprang up in a sweet, shy surprise, her face all tear-flushed, her eyes as bright as dew-drops.

She was one of those heaven-favored mortals that weeping beautifies; she never was guilty of a red nose, or swollen eyes, or—Cupid forgave the vulgarity—the snuffles. She only looked fresher, and fairer, and so pitiful, and Cleve's arms fairly ached to take her to his heart and kiss her tears away. And he would, he vowed, rapturously inside of five minutes.

She took her handkerchief from her pocket—a little linen affair, white and fragrant, and essayed to smile as she wiped the tears from her lashes.

"I am afraid I appear very childish, Mr. Symington—but when I think—when it is all gone—"

Her exquisite mouth quivered again, but she checked the rebellious tears bravely.

"I am as poor as a church-mouse—that is all. A letter from my guardian says everything was invested in the Delacon Mining Company, and the shares are not worth the paper they are printed on."

Cleve fairly worshiped her then—as she honestly explained her position, with the quiet, ladylike way so natural to her.

"It is a misfortune, I admit; and yet, Birdie, there will inevitably come one good of it—you will learn who are your real friends."

Somehow he said it so very earnestly that Birdie glanced curiously at him—then, dropped her eyes under the blue-veined, long-lashed lids.

Cleve was close by her side the next instant, with her hands imprisoned in his, and his impassioned eyes fairly scorching her face.

"You surely understand me, darling? You will let me prove my friendship, my love, my adoration! Little girl, say you will be my own. Tell me you love me, and promise me the great privilege of caring for you forever—my little wife!"

It was so sweet, this manly, honest, eager avowal, and coming, as it did, on the very heels of her misfortune, and from the lips of the only lover she ever had prayed to hear the words from.

And yet—oh! woman's foolish pride!—all her perverse little heart rose in rebellion at accepting everything and giving nothing. It never should be said of Birdie Lorne that she took the first offer she received after her bad luck simply because there was money in it.

So—while Cleve waited, smiling patiently at her bowed head, never doubting that his whole earthly happiness was just at hand, dreaming such rapid, blissful dreams of the future, Birdie deliberately made up her stubborn will, through horrid pangs of pain; then, she lifted her head in a quick, haughty way that it had often delighted in before.

"You are so kind, Mr. Symington, and I appreciate every word you say, and will remember you gratefully to my dying day. But—I will marry no man to whom I would have to feel under such obligations as I would feel to you."

She spoke gently, but with a proud ring to her voice; and Cleve reeled under the sharp, sudden blow. He clenched her hands so tightly that her rings cut in the tender flesh, but she only compressed her lips and made no sign of how he hurt her.

"But, Birdie," and there was such agony in his voice that her own heart quailed a second, "Birdie—don't speak of obligations to the man who loves you as I do! speak as if you knew you would grace a queen's throne, as you would. Birdie! Birdie! don't be so cruel to me!"

Her lips quivered, and her eyes overflowed suddenly.

"You mean what you say, my friend, I know. Or, rather, you think you mean it, which is the same to me, since I cannot accept it. But, you are only pitiful and kind, and sympathetic, and the sight of my tears and grief has touched your great heart. That is all."

She drew her hands away from his, softly.

"It is not all! I love you—"

Then, something in her imperious face made him suddenly desist, and by the way she looked and acted, Cleve Symington knew she was desperately in earnest—she would not marry him, because she was so proud—so proud.

And he went sadly away, feeling numb and stupefied, as he walked home in a strange, dazed way that his fond mother saw, from her peeping-place between the curtains; and her own face lost all its matronly bloom as Cleve came in, whiter than death itself, and threw himself on the sofa.

Then, when he had told her, between spasms of pain that forced him to lie speechless, the rosy flush crept softly back, and into the eyes fairly radiated a happy hopeful light.

"Try to bear it my boy," she said, gently. "You have proved what a noble woman she is, if nothing more."

Then she went out, smiling to herself.

A plain, large room, on the second-story front of a tenement on Sixth avenue, that bore evidences of very recent furnishing, in the new, cheap rag-carpet on the floor, the paper-shades at the windows, the coarse, homely chairs and table, the little coal cooking-stove, on which several flat-irons were heating.

Before the small, mahogany-framed looking-glass that hung between the windows, Mrs. Symes Symington was tying her bonnet-strings—narrow black strings to a black straw bonnet, trimmed with Quaker plainness—that compared suitably with her black alpaca dress and dull plaid blanket-shawl. She smiled at her reflection, then glanced down at her unaccustomed toilet.

"I think I shall be successful—I will be successful, for my boy's sake. The sight of his patient, pale face will inspire me to any degree, and if Miss Lorne is the woman I take her to be, she will prove it before an hour passes over our heads."

She nodded emphatically several times, then looked at the clock on the mantel-shelf.

"Since her descent into poverty—genteel, ladylike poverty, however—I learn she passes this house every day at twelve o'clock, and takes her dinner at the restaurant several doors below; so if I intend to meet her I had better be going."

She locked the door, put the key in her pocket, and went down the stairs into the street—exactly on time; for a slight, graceful figure, clad in gray Allen's twill, passed quietly by, and into the restaurant.

She knew it was Birdie Lorne, as well as Cleve would have known it, although she had never seen her before; and she walked calmly into the restaurant, and took a seat at the same table with the pretty, high-bred girl.

The saloon was nearly full, and Mrs. Symington was glad of it; she could converse all the better with this prospective daughter-in-law of hers; and, naturally, as sensible women, the two formed a speaking acquaintance while waiting for stews.

All at once, as if suddenly impressed with the idea, Mrs. Symington looked curiously in Birdie's face.

"I beg pardon—but are you not Miss Lorne? I am quite sure you must be the young lady my son speaks about so often."

There was something so kindly genial in the air that Birdie did not resent it.

"Your son? I certainly am Miss Lorne; but you have the advantage of me."

"I am Cleve Symington's mother, dear. There, forgive me, but you see I know all about it. I am so thankful to have met you, quite providentially."

Birdie blushed now—as much in surprise as anything else; and involuntarily she glanced at the plain, unfashionable attire.

"You understand? We have been as unlucky as yourself, Miss Lorne. Everything is gone, and Cleve goes out—actually goes out every day."

A little exclamation of amazement met her vague remarks; and Birdie never stopped to wonder where "everything was gone," or if Cleve "went out, actually went out every day" for exercise, pleasure, or to earn his living. Only, the impression received by her was just the one Mrs. Symington intended to convey.

"Poor fellow! Is—he he well?"

She said it so shyly, so sweetly.

"Oh, yes, perfectly well, and as brave as a lion; only—forgive me, dear—only hopelessly cast down, on your account. I am his mother, and to you, the only girl he ever loved, I say—he loves you with an affection that will never abate."

Birdie stirred her stew, and sipped it thoughtfully, her cheeks glowing brighter and rosier, her eyes full of happy smiles.

"And I love him, dear Mrs. Symington. I did, then; only, somehow, I couldn't say so."

"You do—how are you sure you do? Then tell me to tell him, won't you?—or, better yet, come home with me, and tell him yourself. He may be in, or not, I won't say; but if he is—"

Birdie blushed violently, then lifted her frank eyes.

"I will ask him if he thinks I am worthy. Come, dear Mrs. Symington."

In the cheerless room she sat down, with happy, grateful tears in her eyes, while Mrs. Symington brought pencil and paper, with a curious twitch of her mouth that meant smiles or tears—either or both.

"He must have stayed over noon, dear. But you just write what you please, and leave it. He will be so happy when he gets it. He'll come to see you at once, I know. Don't forget your address."

So Birdie poured out her whole heart—completely conquered now; and sealed the letter to Cleve Symington.

Then she kissed the mother over and over.

"I am so thankful we met so strangely; and I am so glad you live in this poor, plain little place—I love you better for it, I know. And when my bills are all paid, for the music I teach, at the end of the quarter, why—why, if Cleve will want me so soon, we'll get pianos, rooms, and fix them so cozy, and we'll be so happy!"

"My darling! you don't regret marrying a poor man, and having to live in a suite of rooms? Look up, Birdie, and tell me, little wife!"

She looked merrily up in his eyes, the wife of six hours, as the two stood in the sunny little room where they had been married, and where Birdie had lived since the "Delacon" shawl failed her.

"Sorry—oh, Cleve, when I think how thankful I am, and how nobly you have endured your sudden loss of fortune, and how happy we will be—Why, where has mother gone?"

Cleve laughed, as he drew her head to his shoulder and smoothed her face.

"I am inclined to be jealous of 'mother,' who I think has gone to the—gone back home, to prepare a homely little dinner for us."

"Let us go now, dear. Don't scold because I ordered a carriage, will you? Mrs. Estler paid me in full this morning."

Cleve bit his lip to hide a laugh, then gravely escorted his bride down to the single horsed coupe in waiting. The man knew his route, and dashed off rapidly, stopping only when he reached the curb in front of a large brown-stone house, that was illuminated from attic to basement.

Cleve looked at Birdie in astonishment; she laughed nervously, then began to cry.

"You're not angry, dear? I didn't know until a month ago that it was all right—I only lost a thousand dollars, after all. Cleve! for your sake, and mother's, I am so happy!"

He kissed her, almost solemnly, as they sat in the little dark carriage.

"My own true, unselfish little darling!"

They entered, found a delicious little supper in readiness, and no one to mar the sweetness of the surprise.

Late in the evening, toward ten o'clock, Birdie rung for her wraps.

"Mother will be waiting for us. Come, Cleve, let's go after her, and bring her here, home."

So they drove off, through so many streets that Birdie wondered where in the world they were going to.

"Darling," Cleve said, abruptly, "shall I confess? shall I tell you I have a surprise for you equal to your own? Look out!"

She looked out, as the carriage stopped at the Symington mansion. An awning was stretched from the door to the carriage-mount, and a velvet carpet was spread for her feet. The joyous music of a band, the flitting of elegantly-dressed ladies past the windows—it rushed over her like a flood.

Cleve had been masquerading for very love of her!

"You forgive me?"

He looked at her with his splendid eyes all alight.

"Oh, Cleve—how could I help it? how you must have loved me! and it is too funny!"

He escorted her in, proudly; and Mrs. Symington, in velvet and diamonds, met them at the entrance.

"Birdie—daughter!"

And all went merry as a marriage-bell.

Victoria:

OR,

THE HEIRESS OF CASTLE OLIFFE.

BY MRS. MAY AGNES FLEMING,
AUTHOR OF "THE DARK SECRET," "AWFUL MYSTERY," "THE RIVAL BROTHERS," ETC.

CHAPTER XII.

THE NUN'S GRAVE.

"Some one must go to the castle," repeated Vivia, a little imperiously. "Papa and grand-mamma will be anxious, and Tom's hurt must be attended to immediately."

Old Judith, like a modern Gorgon, stood staring at this figure, her bearded eyes riveted immovably on her face, and shaking like a withered aspen as she clutched the settle. Victoria stood like a little queen looking down on her subjects; her bright silk dress hanging dripping around her, and her long hair uncurled, soaking with sea-spray, and falling in drenched masses over her shoulders. Barbara, who had been watching her, seemingly as much fascinated as her grandmother, started impetuously up.

"I'll go, grandmother. I can run fast, and I won't be ten minutes."

"You'll do nothing of the kind," interposed Mr. Black, in his customary gruff tones.

"You're a pretty-looking object to go anywhere, wet as a water-dog! Let the young lady go herself. She knows the way better than you."

Victoria turned her blue eyes flashing haughtily fire upon the surly speaker; but without paying the slightest attention to him, Barbara seized a shawl, and, throwing it over her head, rushed into the wild, wet night.

The storm had now broken in all its fury. The darkness was almost palpable. The rain swept wildly in the face of the blast over the sea, and the thunder of the waves against the shore, and the lamentable wail of the wind united in a grand diapason of their own. But the footed dancing-girl heeded neither the wind that seemed threatening to catch up her light form and whirl it into the regions of eternal space, nor the rushing rain that beat in her face and blinded her, as she leaped at random over the slimy rocks. More by instinct than eyesight, she found her way to the park-gates—they were closed and bolted; but that fact was a mere trifle to her. She clambered up the wall like a cat, and dropped, cat-like, on her feet among the wet shrubbery within.

There was no finding a path in the darkness; but she ran headlong among the trees, slipping, and falling, and rising, only to slip, and fall, and rise again, until, at last, as she was stopping exhausted and in despair, thinking she had lost her way in the thickly-wooded plantation, she saw a number of twinkling lights flashing in and out, like fire-flies in the darkness, and heard the echo of distant shouts.

Barbara comprehended instantly that it was the servants out with lanterns in search of the missing trio; and starting up, she flew on again at break-neck speed, until her rapid career was brought to a close by her running with a shock against two persons advancing in an opposite direction. The impetus nearly sent her head over heels; but recovering her center of gravity with an effort, Barbara clutched the branches of a tree, and paused to recover the breath that had been nearly knocked out of her by the concussion.

"Whom have we here?" said the voice of one of the men, coming to a halt, "is it a water-witch, or a kelpi, or a mermaid, or—"

"Why, it's little Barbara!" interrupted the other, holding up the lantern he carried. "Little Barbara Black, actually! My dear child, how in the world came you to be out and up here on such a night?"

Barbara looked at the two speakers and recognized in the first Colonel Shirley, and in the second Mr. Sweet, who held the lantern close to her face, and gazed at her in consternation.

"They're saved, Mr. Sweet; they're all saved! You need not look for them any more, for they're down at our cottage, and I've come up here to bring the news!"

"Saved! How—where—what do you mean, Barbara?"

"Oh, they were in the Demon's Tower—went there at low water; and the tide rose and they couldn't get out; and so I took my boat and rowed them ashore, and he has hurt himself, and they're all down at our house, waiting for somebody to come!"

Colonel Shirley laughed, though a little dismayed withal, at this very intelligent explanation.

"Who is this little sea-goddess, Sweet, and where does she come from?" he asked.

"From Lower Cliffe, colonel; her father is a fisherman there, and I understand the whole matter now!"

"Then we must go down to Lower Cliffe immediately. What could have brought them to the Demon's Tower? But, of course, it's some of Master Tom's handiwork. Wait one moment, Sweet, while I send word to Lady Agnes, and tell the rest to give over the search. What an escape they must have had if they were caught by the tide in the Demon's Tower!"

"And, colonel, you had better give orders to have a conveyance of some sort follow us to the village. The young ladies cannot venture out in such wind and rain; and, if I understood our little messenger aright, some one is hurt. Barbara, my dear child, how could they have the heart to send you out in such weather?"

"They didn't send me—I came!" said Barbara, composedly, as the colonel disappeared for a moment in the darkness. "Father wanted me not to come, but I don't mind the weather. I'll go home now, and you can show the gentleman the way yourself!"

"No, no; I cannot have my little Barbara risking her neck in that fashion. Here comes Colonel Shirley. So give me your hand, Barbara, and I will show you the way by the light of the lantern."

But Miss Barbara, with a little disdainful astonishment even at the offer, declined it, and ran along in the pelting rain, answering all the colonel's profuse questions, until the whole facts of the case were gained.

"Very rash of Mr. Tom—very rash, indeed!" remarked Mr. Sweet, at the conclusion; "and I hope his narrow escape and broken head will be a lesson to him for the rest of his life. Here we are, colonel—this is the house."

The ruddy glow of the firelight was shining still, a cheerful beacon, from the small windows, to all storm-beaten wayfarers without. Barbara opened the door and bounded in, shaking the water from her soaking garments as she ran, followed by the lawyer and the Indian officer. The wood fire blazed still on the hearth; Tom lay on the settle before it; Margaret and Vivia were steaming away in front of the blaze, and Mr. Peter Black sat in the chimney-corner sulky and sleepy. But old Judith's chair opposite was vacant, and old Judith herself was nowhere to be seen. Vivia started up, as they entered, with a cry of joy, and sprung into her father's arms.

"Oh, papa, I am so glad you've come! Oh, papa, I thought I was never going to see you again!"

"My darling! And to think of your being in such danger and I not know it!"

"Oh, papa, it was dreadful! and we would all have been drowned, only for that girl!"

"She is a second Grace Darling, that brave little girl, and you and I can never repay her for to-night's work, my Vivia! But this rash boy Tom—I hope the poor fellow has not paid too dearly for his visit to the Demon's Tower."

"He is not seriously hurt, papa, but his face is bruised, and he says he thinks one of his arms is broken."

"It is all right with Mr. Tom, colonel," said Mr. Sweet, who had been examining Tom's wounds, looking up cheerily. "One arm is broken, and there are a few contusions on his head-piece, but he will be over them all before he is twice married! Ah! there comes the carriage, now!"

"And how is it with little Maggie?" said the colonel, patting her on the head, with a smile.

"Well, Tom, my boy, this is a pretty evening's work of yours—isn't it?"

Tom looked up into the handsome face bending over him, and, despite his pallor, had the grace to blush.

"I am sorry, with all my heart; and I wish I had broken my neck instead of my arm—it would only have served me right!"

"Very true! but still, as it wouldn't have helped matters much, perhaps it's as well as it is. Do you think you can walk to the carriage?"

Tom rose with some difficulty, for the wounds on his head made him sick and giddy, and leaning heavily on Mr. Sweet's arm, managed to reach the door.

The colonel looked at Mr. Black, who still maintained his seat, despite the presence of his distinguished visitors, and never turned his gloomy eyes from the dancing blaze.

"Come away, papa," whispered Vivia, shrinking away with an expression of repulsion from the man in the chimney-corner. "I don't like that man!"

Low as the words were spoken, they reached the man in question, who looked up at her with his customary savage scowl.

"I haven't done nothing to you, young lady, that I know of; and if you don't like me or my house—which neither is much to look at, Lord knows!—the best thing you can do is to go back to your fine castle, and not come here any more."

Colonel Shirley turned the light of his dark bright eyes full on the speaker, who quailed under it, and sunk down in his seat like the coward he was.

"My good fellow, there is no necessity to make yourself disagreeable. The young lady is not likely to trouble you again, if she can help it. Meantime, perhaps this will repay you for any inconvenience you may have been put to to-night. And as for this little girl—your daughter, I presume—we will try if we cannot find some better way of recompensing her in part, at least—for the invaluable service she has rendered."

He threw his purse to the fisherman as he would have thrown a bone to a dog; and turned, an instant after, with his own bright smile, to the fisherman's daughter. She stood leaning against the mantel, the firelight shining in her splendid eyes, gliding her crimson cheeks, and sending spears of light in and out through the tangled waves of her wet

"Victoria!"
The voice again—the same low, sweet, clear voice from beneath their feet!

The faces of both listeners turned white with fear.

The voice from the grave came up on the still summer air solemn and sweet, once more! "From death, one has been saved by the other; and in the days to come, one shall perish through the other. Barbara, be warned! Victoria, beware!"

It ceased. A blackbird perched on an overhanging branch, set up its chirping song, and the voice of Mademoiselle Jeannette was heard in the distance, crying out for Miss Vivian. It broke the spell of terror, and both children fled from the spot.

"Oh Barbara! What was that?" cried Vivian, her very lips white with fear.

"I don't know," said Barbara, trying to hide her own terror. "It came from the grave. It couldn't be the dead nun could it? Is that place haunted?"

"No—yes—I don't know! I think Tom said there was a ghost seen there. Don't tell Jeannette; she will only laugh at us. But I will never go there as long as I live!"

"What made you stay away so long, Mademoiselle Vivian? Your grandmother was afraid you were lost again."

"Let us hurry, then. I want grandmamma to see you, Barbara; so make haste."

The great hall-door of the old mansion was wide open as they came near, and Lady Agnes herself stood in the hall, talking to the colonel and Mr. Sweet; Vivian ran breathlessly in, followed by Barbara, who glanced around the adorned and carved, and pictured hall, and up the sweeping staircase, with its gilded balustrade, in grand, careless surprise.

"Here is Barbara, grandmamma!—here is Barbara!" was Vivian's cry, as she rushed in. "I knew she would come."

"Barbara is the best and bravest little girl in the world!" said Lady Agnes glancing curiously at the bright, fearless face and holding out two jeweled tapered fingers. "I am glad to see Barbara here, and thank her for what she has done, with all my heart."

Mr. Sweet, standing near, with his pleasant smile on his face, stepped forward, hat in hand.

"Good afternoon, my lady. Good afternoon, Miss Victoria. Our little Barbara will have cause to bless the day that has brought her such noble friends."

With a tune on his lips, and the smile deepening inexpressibly, he went out into the great portico, down the broad stone steps guarded by two crouching lions, and along the great avenue, shading off the golden sunshine with its waving trees. Under one of them he paused, with his hat still in his hand, the sunlight sifting through the trees, making his jewelry and his yellow hair flash back its radiance, and looked around. The grand old mansion, the sweeping vista of park and lawn, and terrace and shrubbery, and glade and woodland, mimic lake and radiant rose-garden, Swiss farmhouse and ruined convent, all spread out before him, bathed in the glory of the bright September sun. The tune died away, and the smile changed to an exultant laugh.

"And to think," said Mr. Sweet, turning away, "that one day all this shall be mine!"

CHAPTER XIII. THE MAY QUEEN.

SUCH a morning as that first of May was! Had the good people of Cliftonlea sent up an express order to the clerk of the weather to manufacture them the fairest day he could possibly turn out, they could not have had a more perfectly unexceptionable one than that. Sun and sky were so radiantly bright, they fairly made you wonder to think of them. Ceylon's spicy breezes could not have been warmer or spicier than that blowing over Cliftonlea common. The grass and the trees were as green as, in many other parts of England, they would have been in July. The cathedral-bells were ringing, until they threatened to crack and go mad with joy; and as for the birds, they were singing at such a rate, that they fairly overtopped the bells, and had been heard and fast as it since five o'clock. All the town, *grande tenue*, were hurrying, with eager anticipation, toward the common—a great square, carpeted with the greenest possible grass, besprinkled with pink and white daisies, and shaded by tall English poplars—where the Cliftonlea brass band was already banging away at the "May Queen." All business was suspended; for May Day had been kept, from time immemorial, a holiday, and the lady of Castle Cliffe always encouraged it, by ordering her agents to furnish a public dinner, and supper, and no end of ale, on each anniversary.

Then, besides the feasting and drinking, there was the band and dancing for the young people, until the small hours, if they choose. And so it was no wonder that May Day was looked for months before it came, and was the talk months afterward; and that numberless matches were made there, and that the May Queen was the belle all the succeeding year, and the envy of all the young ladies of the town.

The cathedral-bells had just begun to chime forth the national anthem; the crowd of town-folk kept pouring in a long stream through High street toward the common, when a slight sensation was created by the appearance of two young men, to whom the women courted and the men took off their hats. Both bore the unmistakable stamp of gentlemen, and there was an indefinable something—an indescribable air—about them, that told plainer than words they were not of the honest burghers among whom they walked. One of these, upon whom the cares of life and a green shooting-jacket appeared to sit easily, was remarkable for his stature—being, like Saul, the son of Kish, above the heads of his fellow men—with the proportions of a grandee, and the manners and sinews of an athlete. On an exuberant crop of short, crisp, black curls, jauntily sat a blue Scotch bonnet, with a tall feather. On the Herculean form was the green hunting-jacket, tightened round the waist with a leather belt, and to his knees came a pair of tall Wellington boots. This off-hand style of costume suited the wearer to perfection, which is as good as saying his figure was admirable; and suited, too, the laughing black eyes and dashing air generally. A mustache, thick and black, became well the sunburnt and not very handsome face; and he held his head up, and talked and laughed in a voice sonorous and clear, not to say loud as a bugle-blast.

The young giant's companion was not at all like him—nothing near so tall, though still somewhat above the usual height, and much more slender of figure. But then he had such a figure! One of those masculine faces, to which the adjective beautiful can be applied, and yet remain intensely masculine. A light summer straw hat sat on the fair brown hair, and shaded the broad, pale brow—the dreamy brow of a poet or a painter—large blue eyes, so darkly blue that at first you would be apt to mistake them for black, shaded as they were by girl-like, long, sweeping lashes—wonderful

eyes, in whose clear, calm depths spoke a deathless energy, fiery passion, amid all their calm, and a fascination that his twenty-four years of life had proved to their owner, few could ever resist. The clear, pale complexion, the straight, delicate features, somewhat set and haughty in repose, were a peculiarity of his race, and known to many in London and Sussex as the "Cliffe face." His dress was the most faultless of morning costumes, and a striking contrast to the easy style of his companion's with whom he walked arm-in-arm; pating, now and then, with the other hand, which was gloved, the head of a great Canadian wolfhound trotting by his side. Both young gentlemen were smoking; but the tall wearer of the green jacket was carrying his cigar between his finger and thumb, and was holding forth volubly.

"Of course they will have a May Queen! They always have had in Cliftonlea, from time immemorial; and I believe the thing is mentioned in Magna Charta. If you had not been such a heathen, Cliffe, roaming all your life in foreign parts, you would have known about it before this. Ah! how often have I danced on the green with the May Queen, when I was a guileless little shaver in roundabouts; and what pretty little things those May Queens were! If you only keep your eye skinned to-day, you will see some of the best-looking girls you ever saw in your life."

"I don't believe it."

"Seeing is believing, and you just hold on. The last time I was here, Barbara Black was the May Queen; and what a girl that was, to be sure! Such eyes; such hair; such an ankle; such an instep; such a figure; such a face! Just the sort of thing you painting fellows always go mad about. I believe I was half in love with her at the time, if I don't greatly mistake."

"I don't doubt it in the least. It's a way you have," said his companion, whose low, refined tones contrasted forcibly with the vigorous voice of the other. "How long ago is that?"

"Four years, precisely."

"Then take my word for it, Barbara Black is homely as a hedge-fence by this time. Pretty children always grow up ugly, and *vice versa*."

"Perhaps so," said the giant in the green jacket, and tightening his belt. "Well, it may be true enough as a general rule; for I was commonly ugly when a child, and look at me now! But I'll swear I was an exception; for she is the prettiest girl I ever saw in my life—except one. Only to think, being four years absent from a place, and then not to find it the least changed when you come back."

"Isn't it? I know so little of Cliftonlea that its good people might throw their houses out of the windows, without my being anything the wiser. What a confounded din that band makes! and what a crowd there is! I hate crowds!"

"They'll make way for us," said the young giant; and, true to his prediction, the dense mob encircling the common parted respectfully to let the two young men through. "Look there, Cliffe, that's the May-pole, and that flower-wreathed seat underneath is the queen's throne, God bless her! See that long arch of green boughs and flowers; that's the way her majesty will come. And just look at this living sea of eager eyes and faces! You might make a picture of all this, Sir Artist."

"And make my fortune at the exhibition. It's a good notion, and I may try it some time when I have time. Who is to be the May Queen this year?"

"Can't say. There she comes herself!"

The place where the young men stood was within the living circle around the boundary of the common, in the center of which stood a tall pole, wreathed with evergreens and daisies, and surmounted on the top by a crown of artificial flowers, made of gold and silver paper, sparkling in the sunshine like a golden coronet. From this pole to the opposite gate were arches of evergreen, wreathed with wild flowers, and under this verdant canopy was the queen's train to enter. The militia band, in their scarlet and blue uniforms, stood near the queen's throne, playing now "Barbara Allen;" and the policemen were stationed here and there, to keep the crowd from surging in until the royal procession entered. This common, it may be said in parenthesis, was at the extreme extremity of the town, and away from all dwellings; but there were two large, gloomy-looking stone buildings within a few yards of it—one of them the court-house, the other the county jail—as one of the young gentlemen had reason to know in after days, to his cost.

There was a murmur of expectation and a swaying of the crowd; the band changed from "Barbara Allen" to the national anthem, and the expected procession began to enter. Two by two they came; the pretty village-girls all dressed in translucent white, blue sashes round their waists, and wreaths of flowers on their heads; blonde and brunette, pale and rosy, stately and petite—they came two and two, scattering flowers as they went, and singing "God Save the Queen." It was, indeed, a pretty sight, and the artist's splendid eyes kindled as they looked; but though many of the faces were exceedingly handsome, the May Queen had not come yet. Nearly thirty of this gauzy train had entered and taken their stand round the throne, looking in their swelling amplitude of snowy gauze and swaying crimoline ten times that number, when a mighty shout arose unanimously from the crowd, announcing the coming of the fairest of them all—the Queen of May.

Over the flower-strewn path came a glittering equipage, the Queen of the Fairies herself might have ridden in; a tiny chariot dazling with gilding, vivid with rose-pink paint, and wreathed and encircled with flowers, drawn by six of the snow-clad nymphs, the queen's maids of honor. By its side walked two children, neither more than six years old each, carrying a flag, one the Union Jack of Old England, the other a banner of azure silk, with the name "Barbara" shining in silver letters thereon. And within the chariot rode such a vision of beauty, in the same misty white robes as her subjects, the blue sash round the taper waist, and a wreath of white roses round the stately head, such a vision of beauty as is seen oftener in the brains of poets and artists than in real life, and heard of oftener in fairy tales than this prosy, everyday world. But the radiant vision, with a coronet of shining dark braids twisted round and round the stately head—Nature's own luxuriant crown—with the lustrous dark eyes, flushed cheeks and smiling lips, was no myth of fairy tale, or vapory vision of poetry, but a dazzling flesh-and-blood reality; and as she stepped from her gilded chariot, fairest where all were fair, "queen" rose of the rosebud garden of girls, such a shout went up from the excited crowd, that the thunder of brass band and drum was drowned altogether for fully ten minutes.

"God Save the Queen!" "Long Live Queen Barbara!" rung and re-rung on the air, as if she were indeed a crowned queen, and the tall,

stately white figure, slender and springy as a young willow, bent smilingly right and left, while the band still banged out its patriotic tune, and the crowd still shouted themselves hoarse.

"Great Heaven!" exclaimed Cliffe, "what a perfectly beautiful face!"

The young giant in shooting-jacket did not answer. From the first moment his eyes had fallen upon her face had been going through all the phases of emotion that any one face can. Astonishment, admiration, recognition, doubt and delight, came over it like clouds over a summer sky; and as she took her seat under the flower-bedecked May-pole, spreading out her gauzy skirt and azure ribbons, he broke from his companion with a shout of "It is!" and springing over the intervening space in two bounds, he was kneeling at her feet, raising her hand to his lips, and crying in a voice that rung like a trumpet-tone over the now silent plain:

"Let me be first to do homage to Queen Barbara!"

(To be continued—commenced in No. 269.)

The Terrible Truth: OR, THE THORNHURST MYSTERY.

BY MRS. JENNIE DAVIS BURTON,
AUTHOR OF "STRANGELY WED," "THE FALSE WIDOW," "ADRIA, THE ADOPTED," "CORAL AND RUBY," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXV. SUCH A WELCOME HOME!

MR. GRAHAME himself found time for a run down to the coast, a week after Dare's unsuccessful mission there. There was a consultation between the two head powers, and afterward Nora was called to an interview with her guardian. He stood in a stiff, constrained fashion, his hands crossed upon his back, looking excessively uncomfortable and uncertain how to open his subject. He was a man of few words, however, not given to beating about the bush, and he broached his point without delay.

"I have just been talking with Mrs. Grahame, Nora, and we are obliged at last to take you into family confidence. I am finding myself in such straitened circumstances of late that it is absolutely necessary to close all drains for a time. We cannot open our town-establishment as heretofore. My own proposition was to return there and remain in quietude, but my wife suggests a more suitable arrangement for herself. Unless you object to being left, she has concluded to accept an invitation from the Vandiveres to make one of their party for a late trip to the mountains and the lakes. For you, if you can content yourself meanwhile, I can think of nothing better than Thornhurst—that is, if you still hold to your ridiculous idea of begging yourself for a fancy. If you will consent to draw upon your own income ahead of the mere sum set aside, which is all but exhausted now, of course there will be no need of banishing you from society."

"I shall go to Thornhurst," Nora answered, decisively. "I have no idea of changing my intention, Mr. Grahame. As soon as I am of age I shall make over everything to the proper heir. I am not sure that I shall even object to a few months' seclusion."

"To your own taste, my dear. It would be useless to offer objections, I presume. Now, when can you be ready to leave here?"

He drew out his watch and consulted it, anxious to end the interview.

"In a couple of hours, if you like."

"To-morrow morning will answer. I shall accompany you to Thornhurst, of course. I will probably find it tiresome there, but since it is your own choice I have nothing more to say."

He hardly breathed freely until she was out of his presence again. This was by no means the part Mr. Grahame would have preferred taking, but his conscience was not sufficiently tender to trouble him much after he had fairly enlisted in his share of the undertaking.

The lady chaperone met her charge with a small storm of protest.

"Going to Thornhurst, Nora—positively going alone to Thornhurst! Indeed, if you are determined I cannot permit that. I shall give up my own plans and go back with you. Thornhurst will be dreary as a desert, musty and draughty after standing two years unoccupied. Do pray, for the time, throw over your fanatical inclinations, my dear. I shall have no patience with you left if you insist upon isolating yourself in that absurd fashion; you should not do it if my authority availed for anything."

"Don't let us quarrel over it, at least. You always did view me as irreconcilable. I have quite made up my mind to go to Thornhurst, but you shall alter one arrangement of your own. I will not hear to that. If I make my own choice it is no reason you should suffer the consequences."

And to all further remonstrances Nora was firm; the law of the Medes and Persians was never more fixed than she in her intention to restore the moneys and estates left away from Vane Vivian, and the present issue could be but a commencement of her sacrifice.

She went with her guardian to Thornhurst the next day. Dare had taken a flying trip there, and the result was that the interior of the mansion was at its gloomiest. The ranges of lofty spacious rooms that had been so pleasant in Colonel Vivian's time were closed. Shutters were up at every window of the house except in the rear where the few servants left in charge held forth. The grounds and the shrubbery were in order, but the whole place was desolate, and the wind swept through the cedar grove with the mournful plaint which she never heard now without a shudder.

The housekeeper appeared to meet them, not the Mrs. Ford of olden time, but a hard-visaged, angular woman, with an uncompromising demeanor, and black glittering eyes which if they had no evil power certainly never softened to bestow any particular good in a glance.

"You will be left for the time in charge of Mrs. Bennett, my dear," said Nora's guardian, as they followed into the morning-room, which that august person unlocked and threw open. "I shall take occasion to run down in the course of another week and see how you are getting on. Meantime, if you repent your hasty, and I must consider it unwise decision, you have only to drop me a line."

"I never shall repent it," she asserted, positively. "And remember, guardian, when Sir Rupert comes, you are to bring him down here without fail. I did not write because he must be well on his way long before this."

They had luncheon together, and almost immediately afterward Mr. Grahame took his departure. Late on the following day he sat in his counting-room, Owen Dare in an opposite

place, discussing in detail the plan which the latter had fully laid out.

"How in reason you expect to coerce her when she once learns why she was sent there is more than I can understand, Dare. Deserted as the neighborhood is you can't very well lock her up there and station a jailer at her door; while it is like the girl to walk out of the house, shake the dust off her feet, and begin the new kind of life she proposes for by-and-by, music-teaching, governessing, or something of that sort. She's sure to find some way for herself, too, by George! She's not one of your namby-pamby women to be put down by the first little discouragement. She's equal to taking the matter in her own hands and raising popular sympathy for herself if you press her too hard. Now that the bird is caged for you, how are you going to keep her caged is what I want to know?"

"Bolts and bars would never suffice," answered Dare, with a laugh. "I can trust more safely to her own obstinate will. When she once learns the stand you will take I don't suppose a kingdom would induce her to step beneath your roof again. She has no friends to whom she would care to go in such a crisis. Take my word for it, no temptation will persuade her from Thornhurst until she's renounced her right legally—which I propose she shall not do. The baronet must be kept away from her, but that will not be a difficult matter, likewise all other officious friends. Let her grow well disgusted with her choice of location; then go down with me for a week; let me plead my own suit persistently as I may; let me convince her that I am not to be shaken off; and, if all fails, there is the last alternative I mentioned the other day. The time is not very long, but it is long enough. Nora Carteret must be my wife before she is twenty-one."

It promised to be an exciting contest, Mr. Grahame thought. The clashing of those two strong wills, one deep and subtle, the other frank but unwavering, must be a battle closely fought and hardly won. Any other man but Dare might have given up the task at the very first, but what mere woman's strength could resist his cold-blooded, crafty skill!

While they still sat there, a knock fell upon a panel of the door, and an under-clerk put his head inside. A person wished very particularly to see Mr. Grahame—no name. Should he show him in?

"Show him in," said Dare, in an aside. "I presume you are not afraid of a creditor, Grahame, since your time is extended."

The other nodded to the clerk, who ushered in a stranger, a moment later—a sturdy, thickset man, bronzed by much exposure, wearing a beard half a yard long, a trifle rough and abrupt in his manner of act and speech. The merchant rose and placed a chair.

"If your business is with me," he said, observing the other's doubtful glance toward Dare, "you may speak without reserve. What name, may I ask?"

"Prescott; you'll not know me by it, however. I am just arrived from Rio Janeiro, lately from the diamond mines of Brazil. You don't hear so much of them in this day of South African excitement. I am not here to talk about myself, but a Miss Lenore Carteret, who, I am informed, is under your guardianship at present."

"Miss Carteret is my ward," assented the merchant, wonderingly.

"I am here for the purpose of offering Miss Carteret two hundred thousand dollars for her share in the Brazilian mines. I have the papers signifying her right in my possession. I propose leaving them for your examination now, and calling another time for the decision. I shall wish to see Miss Carteret herself before any bargain is concluded. I was a friend of her father, and he left those documents with me over five years ago, just before his death. They were not worth the paper in them then. I am supplied with references, and will give you the addresses of Rio Janeiro firms, if you wish to satisfy yourself regarding the market value of the claims."

The stranger was a man of deeds as well as words, as evinced by his immediate production of a notebook, on a blank leaf of which he wrote the addresses of a couple of banking firms, tearing out and presenting it, along with testimonials of his own responsibility. The silence of a moment, broken by the rapid scratching of his pencil, had reigned in the counting-room. Astonishment held the other two spellbound, but Mr. Grahame, with the substantial testimony of the papers touching his hand, rallied.

"Upon my word, this is wonderful news. Like an Arabian Nights' tale, for all the world. You are a stranger in the city, I presume, Mr. Prescott. Can I not prevail upon you to accept my hospitality, though as it chances my ward is now out of town? My wife has but just returned, and she will do her best to make your stay pleasant."

"Thanks for the kindness of your invitation, but I shall leave the city by to-night's train. I am on the way with a comrade, and I have sorrowful news for him, poor fellow. Very sorrowful you may know him, sir; his name is Vane Vivian."

"Vane Vivian?" echoed Mr. Grahame, aghast. Dare started, and sunk his teeth into his under lip to control the tremor which agitated him.

"I have just heard that his father is dead, and Vivian is not yet aware of the fact. I am to meet him at the depot in time for the 6:30 train. Perhaps you can give me fuller particulars than I learned; truth to tell, I was too shocked for the moment to ask questions, or to think that he would wish to know."

Owen Dare shot a quick glance at the merchant. He was pale to his lips, and with a muttered apology rose hastily and went out, leaving the two alone.

"Will you tell me what you heard regarding the matter, Mr. Prescott?"

"It was at the lawyer's. Vivian gave me the address, and I went there to make inquiry about Miss Carteret's present whereabouts. I was simply informed that Colonel Vivian was dead, given your address, and referred here. This news will be a sad shock to my comrade, Mr. Grahame."

"Great heavens!" cried the merchant, starting to his feet excitedly. "What does the rash fellow mean by coming back? Why, man alive, don't you know that Colonel Vivian was murdered New Year's Eve, three years ago, and that Vane Vivian is accused of the crime? Who would have dreamed that, after baffling the law this long, he would run deliberately into such horrible danger as this?"

"Vane Vivian accused of murder!" cried Prescott, incredulously. "It's preposterous! He wouldn't willingly hurt a fly. I tell you he does not even know of his father's death."

"Your thinking so doesn't alter the fact. He will be hung for the murder as surely as he is caught here. I wouldn't lift my hand to cheat the law, but for the sake of the old family name—I'm distantly connected with

the family by marriage myself—I hoped he would never turn up. It's most unfortunate, most foolhardy! The evidence against him is too strong to be broken."

"Vane Vivian is never the man to have done a murder," said Prescott, rising. "I'd stake my soul on that. It's absurd to be even thought of. I've been with him now two years, and I'll swear there's nothing criminal hanging about him. It's a terrible mistake, and he'll have it cleared up, take my word for it."

"I trust he may, but if you know the facts well as I do, you would not be hopeful."

"I am going now to be on the look-out for him. If you are his friend, you will come along and tell him what you know of this horrible accusation."

For an instant Richard Grahame hesitated. He had a morbid dread at prospect of being drawn into a criminal case in any capacity, while his own remote connection with the young man prompted him to favor any chance of escape which might remain. Possibly the strong partisanship of this wealthy miner was not without its effect. He took his hat from its place, and, with a brief assent, went along.

The usual crowd clogged the doors of the waiting-room, and one man standing a little apart gave a sharp look at the two as they passed. They pushed their way through, and stood in the less-thronged space within.

"He is not here yet," said Prescott, with a glance about. "He will be shortly, though; no temptation would induce him to miss the train." He stood looking out of a window at the shifting throng, somewhat troubled in his mind, but less seriously than he would have been had he known the whole array of dark appearances to be brought against his friend.

A half-hour dragged away while they waited. Prescott stirred and glanced up at a little clock ticking against the wall at last. It was twenty-five minutes after six. He did not speak, but again turned his glance to the platform without.

At the same moment a tall form was coming with swift regular strides down the street. The same man who had been lounging a little apart from the crowd for this last half-hour fixed him with a glance, and stepped forward a pace.

"Mr. Vane Vivian?" he said, inquiringly.

"That is my name."

"I have business with you, sir."

"Then I must trouble you to cut it short or to defer it altogether for the present time. Pardon, but I have not recognized you, and I have no more than easy time to reach the train."

"I must trouble you to defer the trip, Mr. Vivian. With a motion of his hand he threw back the lapel of his coat and disclosed the badge of the detective force. "I am obliged to officiate in a most unpleasant duty. I am sorry to be the cause of your inconvenience and delay. I arrest you in the name of the law." His hand was laid on Vane's shoulder, there was an unpleasant earnestness about his speech denoting that this was no jest, but the younger man turned an incredulous face upon him.

"You have mistaken me for some one else, I think. I came on shore from a three years' absence scarcely four hours ago. If I am detained one minute more I will lose my train. Is this absurd charge so important you cannot take my word and let me off?"

"There is no mistake," said the officer, calmly. "I arrest you for the murder of your father, Colonel Seymour Vivian, at midnight of New Year's eve, 1899."

"My father?" Every trace of color faded from Vane's face. He stood like one turned to stone, a heavy stillness clogging his heart, scarcely a pulse stirring for one awful moment.

CHAPTER XXVI. A HEART'S CRY!

DURING that moment the two men from within the waiting-room came hurrying out, Prescott in advance, his swarthy face plainly expressing his perturbed state of mind. He put out his hand and grasped Vane's with a strong pressure.

"My poor boy, has it come upon you already? I hoped to have seen you first to break this terrible news."

"It can't be possible, Prescott. This person tells me—great heavens!—that my father was murdered the very night I left him, almost three years ago. Dead all this time, and I not forgiven!"

The despair in his face wrung the heart of the comrade who had grown to love him as a younger brother. The officer was stolid, and the merchant standing a little back only anxious to escape attention.

"It is terrible, the disappointment and the shock," said Prescott, in deep sympathy. "Are you—" he glanced at the officer hesitating.

"Under arrest for the crime—yes." Vane was very pale, but perfectly collected as the full force of his present position struck him. "What a welcome home, my friend!"

"But, good Lord! Vivian, you don't take this accusation as a serious thing? Surely you can clear yourself? Can't you rid yourself of suspicion in a single hearing, without the publicity of a trial? Stay; here is an old friend of yours who may be able to throw light upon what's dark to you."

"Mr. Grahame," said Vane, observing him for the first. "You must know the particulars of my father's terrible fate. Heaven knows, I would have died myself rather than harm should have come to him."

During the brief space they had been standing there an incoming train had shrieked at the opposite side of the depot-building, disgorged its passengers and rushed on its way again. One among those newly arrived pushed forward to claim his baggage and give directions regarding it; then, following in the wake of the steady stream, came out through the gate and upon the little group drawn out of the way of the passers-by. He stopped short for an instant, but after one amazed glance strode forward into their midst.

"Vivian, my dear fellow, what does this mean? Odd, that after looking for you over half the world, you are the first man I meet on my return."

"A fortunate chance has surely sent you, Sir Rupert," answered Vane, yielding his hand to the other's hearty grasp. "You were always my friend in trouble, but merciful heavens! that I should have to call on you in trouble like this. I am under arrest for my father's murder. How and where did it occur? why am I accused?"

The officer put in a word at that.

"There'll be other chances of explanation; we are drawing attention. You'll be taken on by the first train to-morrow; for to-night, if you'll give me your word of honor not to attempt an escape you can go to a hotel in company with these gentlemen if they wish. You'll be under surveillance, of course, but that need not be made apparent if nothing suspicious transpires."

"I give you my word to attempt no escape," said Vane, adding hurriedly, as the officer signaled a carriage: "Sir Rupert Archer, let me present a true friend of mine, Mr. Prescott. I need not ask if you two will see me through the result."

Brief recognitions were exchanged, Sir Rupert spoke a word to the merchant, who was turning away, and followed into the carriage. The officer mounted beside the driver, and the vehicle rolled away.

"You ask for particulars," said the baronet, on the way. "Is it possible you never heard of your father's murder, shot dead, at midnight of that New Year's eve you were last at Thornhurst? Can you account for yourself at that time, Vane?"

"At midnight? Like a vivid picture the remembrance of that time rose up in his mind, the avenue gates, the fitful moonlight upon the snow, the tall dark-robed female form, the dull desperation in his heart, the clear, vibrating strokes as they cleft the air!

"I can account for myself, but, oh! Sir Rupert, that will not give me back my father." His voice broke, the silent pressure of his friend's hand was better sympathy than words.

"Your first duty is to yourself now," said the baronet, after a moment. "You will be taken on and probably have a hearing, immediately after your arrival. Let me secure your proof and escape a trial if possible. Can you prove an alibi?"

"By Miss Montrose. I met her at the gates as I went out that night, and we stood together as the clock struck midnight. I left her there when I ran, as I had to do to catch the train."

"Of course you saw others immediately afterward," said Sir Rupert, anxiously. "Some on the way, at least the people at the station?"

"Not one; I had no time. I sprang to the platform after the cars were in motion. Miss Montrose was the last person of all my old acquaintances I ever saw until this day. I did not even get the papers for months afterward. I never heard one word from home—my own fault, but I had an object."

A cold fear stole over the baronet. His friend's life hung on the testimony of Miss Montrose, and Miss Montrose had disappeared within twelve hours following that meeting, almost as suddenly, almost as mysteriously, and later quite as wholly, as Vane himself.

The merchant found Dare awaiting him on his return.

"That news this afternoon quite startled me," he said, apologetically. "Is it a positive fact that Vane has 'ventured back? I can scarcely credit it in my own cool senses."

"Back and taken already. He was arrested at the depot, and will be taken on to-morrow. If facts were not so strong against him, I could almost believe him innocent."

"You forget how skilled in deception he is. I haven't a doubt of his guilt or a hope of the result, but it's a terrible calamity that he should turn up. I want to speak of the other matter, however—regarding Nora. The events of this day must change our plans materially."

"You will be in luck if you carry them out, Dare. Two fortunes that will aggregate a million. The diamond mine affair is an unparalleled streak of fortune. It will not make your undertaking any the easier, I predict."

"It shall not have the opportunity of making it harder. We must hasten matters. Nora must not hear a breath of that or of Vane's return until she is my wife. I shall go down to Thornhurst to-morrow, Mr. Grahame, before either the papers or any private hint has reached her. You must come along and avow yourself unconditionally in my favor. There must be no hesitation now, on your part or on mine, and no time lost in gaining our point. I shall drop a note to Reverend Grattins to-night to join us at the village within the next three days. I can depend on him and on you."

"On me certainly, Dare! I did not approve the affair from the start, but I am in for it, and I am not one to forget the service you have been to me."

"Where has Vivian been all this time?" asked Dare, abruptly. "What account does he give of himself?"

"He is straight from Brazil, was in partnership with Prescott there, I take it. He has made money, too, the miser says; it is probable that has brought him back. Strange that the officers should have got hold of him so soon."

Dare might have explained the fact had he chosen, since a word from him had given the alarm.

Three days at Thornhurst mansion went tediously by. It was dreary beyond all expression. Even Nora's bright, healthy spirits already suffered from the contrast to her late gay career. Three depressing days, during which she had seen and spoken to no mortal save the stiff, hard-faced housekeeper, the no less stiff footman, and the old deaf gardener, the sole remaining relic in the small retinue of the colonel's time, gave a different aspect to the seclusion which had not seemed forbidding of itself. The old brown house beyond the cedar grove was fast falling into a ruin; of the families who had formed a social circle in the vicinity three years before, all were scattered. Mr. Telford of the village was away on an indefinite tour with his pretty bride, the Miss Gray of that momentous Christmas-time association. The change was great as from tropical splendor to Arctic barrenness and monotony.

It was late afternoon of the fourth day after her arrival, and Nora was out upon a long walk, the only relief she found. It was a raw, cloudy, chilly day, but she never minded adverse weather. She came homeward through the evening gray with weary steps, with an oppression which she charged to the heavy atmosphere and dull surroundings weighing upon her. A man's form leaned against the gatepost, a man's eyes watched her advance with a strong, fierce gleam, quickly suppressed, as hat in hand he opened the gate. Her first intimation of his presence came when she glanced up to find herself face to face with Owen Dare.

She bowed and was passing on without observing the hand he put out, but he turned quickly to join her with reproachful solicitude. "It is a miserable day to be out, Nora, with this damp breeze. Aren't you going to give me a welcome to your own home?"

"Not mine, Mr. Dare; you know I never have considered it so. I can only wonder you should ever care to revive such memories as this place must bring to you." What was there in those straightforward brown eyes looking upon him to discompose his usually steady nerves, to send his own glance wandering to bring that cruel gleam into his eyes again, to mark hard lines about his thin, compressed lips—what? The change was for only an instant, but it had not escaped Nora, and a doubt which she had put away more than once as an injustice not to be harbored in her

thoughts faintly stirred. Had he any knowledge of the assassin who had done his dark work so securely, with such crafty malice throwing suspicion upon one whom the strongest circumstantial evidence had never induced her to believe other than innocent? She was too just to accuse Dare even in her own mind of having been accessory to the deed, but her previous distrust of him had settled into a deeply-rooted aversion she had not tried to conquer. The swift change went over his face and was gone in a single second of time.

"How can it bring me anything but grateful remembrances? I had little claim upon its last owner, but he was exceedingly generous toward me. It was here, too, that I discovered the spell which one pair of bright eyes had thrown around me, which all your cruelty, Nora, has never broken."

"Mr. Dare!" She flashed about upon him with an indignant flush burning in her cheeks. "This is an interdicted subject between us. Why will you not understand that any reference to it is at once most distasteful and perfectly useless? There is a limit where patience ceases to be a virtue, and I arrived at it ten days ago. I can find no excuse for this resumption of a question which was settled beyond mistaking then. I shall not fail to speak to Mr. Grahame when he comes down in guarding against like annoyances in the future."

"Your guardian came down with me, Miss Carteret. I hoped to find you in a more compliant frame of mind after experiencing the solitude here. I came for the purpose of renewing my previous offer, of giving you one more chance to escape the fate you would bring upon yourself."

She was walking swiftly toward the mansion now, in a silence that was not broken, as he apparently waited a reply. He strode in advance a pace and confronted her as they reached the wide flight of steps leading to the entrance-door, put forth his hand and clutched her wrist, when she would have passed, with a pressure like a tight, snaky coil.

"You choose to treat me with contempt, Miss Carteret. You have never taken any pains to conceal your disdain. You have treated me cruelly as you would not have done the most abject slave in creation, but because I have been your unresisting slave is no reason why I may not yet become your master. It is a long time since I first swore to myself that you should yet be my wife, and I am not the man to break my oaths when my soul is in them. I declare to you now that you shall be mine, peacefully and by fair means if you will, if not in spite of all resistance of yours, and by a less gentle way than I should prefer to use. Once more, I will tell you, and you have chosen for power; will you give me the favorable answer which you shall give sooner or later, willing or unwilling?"

She saw the demon looking out of his eyes, and a pang of fear, such as had never assailed her in all her life before shot to her heart. It carried every particle of color from her face, more than ever marble-like in the fading light, but she neither shrunk nor covered under the cold horror come upon her. She looked scornfully back into those pitiless eyes.

"Once more, Mr. Dare, if you and I were the only two persons on earth, my answer would still be the same. No power on earth can avail to alter it."

"Don't be too sure of that. If I were driven to it, I would hunt you to the ends of the earth rather than let you escape me now. I am not driven to it, and you have chosen for yourself what my course toward you shall be. You force me to the use of harsh measures, and I shall not hesitate to avail myself of them. Come in, Miss Carteret, and take your guardian's opinion of the matter."

He sprang up the steps and threw open the door for her. Lights were gleaming in the little parlor where Mr. Grahame awaited them; a genial blaze was upon the hearth, an air of more general comfort prevailed than had of late reigned at Thornhurst. Nora swept into his presence, her white, intense face calm through great excitement, telling him the story at a glance. Dare followed and turned the key in the door as he closed it.

"Mr. Grahame, I ask you to protect me from such insults as that man has just now put upon me. You have control here, for the present time, and I demand that you shall deny him admittance to the house so long as I remain."

"Miss Carteret is a trifle excited and scarcely responsible for the demand," said Dare, coolly, sauntering forward to face them both, and resting his elbow upon the mantel. "Will you be kind enough to place a chair for your ward, Mr. Grahame, and assure her of your approbation of the proposal I have already had the pleasure of making to you?"

Nora declined the proffered seat with a gesture, her eyes fixed in silent questioning upon her guardian's face.

"Dare certainly has my sanction, Nora. I must beg that you will consider again and more favorably in regard to him."

"I have rejected Mr. Dare's suit finally and irrevocably, sir. He has insulted me, first by his pertinacity, and afterward by making ungentlemanly threats when I repeated my decision."

"I have assured Miss Carteret that she shall be my wife, willing or unwilling, by means fair or unfair. She will doubtless wish to appeal for your protection on that basis."

The sneer in his voice stung her, but her gaze did not waver from her guardian's face. It was a trying position to Mr. Grahame, but Dare's presence kept him firmly to the mark.

If you are persistent in refusing what is to your own interest, my dear, we must consult that interest for you," he answered with dignity. "Dare is suited to you in all respects; I approve of him as your future husband; and I beg you may not occasion trouble by holding to some absurd prejudice of your own."

"Do you mean, sir, that you have leagued yourself with him? Is this keeping the trust Colonel Vivian reposed in you? I cannot escape persecution, if you countenance it, but if your control over my actions extended for years instead of a few weeks yet, if you employed years in attempting to coerce me in a matter like this, you would never succeed."

A dark red flush crept up the merchant's brow. Like many another unreasonable man, knowing himself in the wrong, he went into a passion to cover his confusion.

"You shall give what you have never been particular in according me—obedience," he declared angrily. "Make up your mind to what is inevitable, Miss Carteret. Dare shall be your husband, and that within this very week, if only for the purpose of preventing you from scattering Colonel Vivian's bequest to the winds. No girl in her senses would act as you have proposed. My trust will not permit me to sanction such folly."

Nora's lips compressed in a firm straight line, her eyes had in them the look of a hunted creature turned at bay, but she did not speak a word.

"It is unpleasant for a lady to retract her word," said Dare, bowing in mock politeness toward her. "I shall not ask Miss Carteret to do so. But I shall expect her to receive me with the deference a bride should extend toward her intended when I come with the clergyman at this hour to-morrow. I appreciate the truth of the saying 'there's many a slip,' etc., too fully to risk unnecessary delay. It has come my time to make demands now, Nora. Be assured that I shall never plead again."

The brown indignation eyes blazed upon him. "I should deny you at the very altar. What do you suppose me to be that you think I would have any measure forced upon me, much less a step like that which would compromise all my life? If any fraud or any unpromised power could force me to really become your wife, I would defy you afterward and throw off your claim. It cannot be done, for you can never wring my consent."

"My friend the clergyman will dispense with that," said Dare, coolly. "Afterward the law gives the husband control of his wife, and there are private institutions provided for just such violent and unconquerable forms of mania as yours, my dear Nora. The subject is hardly a pleasant one, and if you please we will drop it here."

"And that is the dinner-bell," said Mr. Grahame, rising. "We will wait while you put off your wraps, Nora."

"Thanks; I do not wish dinner." "You had better come, my dear. Even sentiment cannot exist without a substance."

"You will please hold me excused, sir, now and for the remainder of the evening."

"In that case," said Dare, "let me make my adieux. I shall go back to the village for the night. I can leave you safely in such excellent care as your guardian will extend."

He bowed but did not offer his hand, unlooked the door and held it wide for her. She swept out with the stateliness of an injured queen, but up in her own room where a dim light was burning, with the bolt slipped home, she fell on her knees by the bed and buried her face in the covering, a silent, motionless form as long minutes went by.

She had never felt her desolation so completely before. They would never dare to put their threats into execution; they could not do it if they had the will; they were trying to frighten her into submission—and the proud lips curled, the heart swelled in bitter defiance, but under all was the feeling of utter loneliness, of isolation from all close sympathy upon the earth.

Bright stars were shining out of an opalescent sky when she lifted her face, changed and worn in this little time. She crossed the floor throwing a window wide, and leaning out to catch the breeze upon her brow. Did it bring to her a message from some far-away point of the wide world where she might fancy a weary wanderer straying?

Her hands went up to clasp her forehead; the firm lips quivered and parted, and through the proud-pained heart thrilled the cry which no breath uttered, which was of itself a revelation she had crushed from her own recognition through three long years:

"Oh, Vane, Vane!"

To be continued—commenced in No. 262.

The Revelation of a Night.

BY ARCHIE C. IRONS.

"'Twas all through the roses so ripe and so red, And all when the summer was shining her best," sung a manly voice.

"Ray Clifford, upon my word! You nearly scared the small stock of sense that I have from me. I thought you were in New York."

Mr. Clifford swung himself across the stream with a little laugh, and looked down on the tall, graceful woman who stood beside him.

"Which shows the fallacy of your thoughts, Miss Leicester! Do you suppose, for an instant, that I could stay in hot, dusty New York, with the manifold attractions of Almyr Place and Miss Lillie Leicester? No, indeed! I expected you would give me credit for better taste than that."

A sudden flush rose to Miss Leicester's face, and she looked persistently across the little stream for an instant. Wild climbing roses, waving grass, blood-red heath, contrasting vividly with the bright, green leaves; the June fragrance among them all, and the June sunshine falling athwart them in little silver bars through the grand old trees. Only an instant she saw these; then the long lashes were lifted and the brown eyes flashed him an amused glance.

"But, you see I don't, though! and I shall give you less if you don't quit paying compliments. What do you suppose Miss Rochester would say?"

Ray Clifford's face flushed, then grew pale at the carelessly spoken words. Miss Leicester looked bewildered.

"I sincerely beg your pardon," she said, hurriedly. "I did not think—I had no idea—" He made a little gesture, and then laughed musically.

"It is not you who should beg my pardon," he said, "but I yours for disturbing you, but I couldn't resist a run across the woods from the station, and had no idea of finding you here. How grand everything looks! Only it is so oppressively hot one can't enjoy it."

They were walking now, along the avenue of trees through which you could catch glimpses of Almyr Place. Fountains, arbors, parks, terraces and drives were around, the whole lying motionless in the moonlight sun. Not a soul was stirring about the house, and windows and doors were thrown wide open to admit the air. The shrill pipe of a locust over to admit the air. The shrill pipe of a locust over to admit the air.

"What a contrast to the dusty, bustling city," Ray said, as they paused under a clematis-draped arbor. "I guess we are the only ones enjoying it. The balance of the company seem to be taking their noonday siesta."

He broke off a little spray of flowers, twirling them carelessly in his hand, as he spoke. He looked a fitting prince for the royal woman by his side, with his splendid physique, graceful carriage and handsome, sun-browned face.

Three days before word had come to him that his presence was needed in New York, and he had left the gay company at Almyr Place, with the expectation that his business would detain him fully a week. It was much better than he had anticipated, however, and now, before half the allotted time had passed, he was back among them, ready to play the gallant to his beautiful fiancée, Audrey Rochester.

A pang of keenest pain crossed him at the thought. Why had he been so blind? He asked himself the question, and called himself an idiot in the same breath. He had never loved Audrey—he knew it now, when it was too late,

and the love which should have been hers, was Lillie Leicester's. He had striven against it, with all the strength of his powerful will, but it was inexorable as fate itself. He leaned toward her, his clustering hair almost brushing her cheek, hardly knowing what he did.

"Oh, Lillie, Lillie!" he cried, passionately, "I love you! I love you!"

She started back, white and stern, a scornful light blazing in her eyes.

"You forget what you are saying, Mr. Clifford. Such words from you are only an insult!"

He recoiled from her, white to the very lips, and recovered his self-possession by a mighty effort.

"Miss Leicester," he said, and his voice was husky, "I can never atone for this; but I hardly knew what I was about. It shall never happen again. Whatever my fate, I will meet it like a man. May I hope for your forgiveness?"

"Bon jour, monsieur," said a silvery voice; "who would have expected to see you here?" He turned suddenly, and confronted a superb-looking woman, clad in a light outdoor costume, with jewels glittering on her shapely hands—Miss Audrey Rochester! She glanced, half suspiciously, from one to the other.

"Upon my word, you two people look remarkably strange, somehow; and no wonder! I suppose I did come rather suddenly. Did you ever see such weather? It is hot enough to roast an African, and they are all fast asleep up to the house, and it's quiet as a graveyard. Oh, dear!" and Miss Rochester yawned, and fanned herself languidly, as she sunk into a seat.

The twain had recovered their self-possession, and Ray was his cool, gentlemanly self, as he answered Miss Rochester in his usual happy way. Lillie's cheeks were a trifle more carnine-colored than usual, but it was the heat, probably. In spite of Audrey's pride, position, and charming ways, she could not like her, though she had striven hard to do so, and now more than ever before, and she watched her as she chatted gayly, and away down in her heart was the thought that she was not worthy her affianced husband, Ray Clifford.

There was a grand masked ball coming off in a few days, at Almyr Place, and Audrey chatted volubly concerning the costumes that would appear, and what would adapt itself suitably to such-and-such persons. And in the midst of it, a party came trooping down from the house, and joined them in the cool shade of the trailing vines.

From garret to cellar, Almyr Place house is ablaze with lights. The masked ball is at its height, and the woodbine spices are wafted abroad, and the music of the roses blown.

Out on the fresh night air the music is borne, mellowed by the distance, and sounding impressively sweet. On the grounds, lights shine like resplendent stars among the shrubbery, rendering darker the shadows cast by its foliage, almost tropical in its richness, and lighting up the sparkling fountains, till they seem like things of life, in their ever-changing beauty.

Leaning against a trellis, in the shadow cast by the overhanging vines, and leisurely smoking a cigar, was one who seemed to care very little for the pleasure within. He had laid aside his mask, and clad in the long, flowing robes of a priest, he stood in a dejected attitude, looking up toward the house. His thoughts were anything but pleasant, judging by his face, and at last he straightened up, and threw away his cigar with an impatient gesture.

"The golden lamps are all aglow Beneath a palace roof and ambience, Wild tones of music ebb and flow, And break on shores of loveliest rhyme; Proud forms are flitting to and fro, 'Tis all the best collection of Diadems, Soft as the drifting moonlight snow They move about the gorgeous room."

sung a musical voice at his elbow. "You are behaving like a lunatic to-night, Tom. I never saw you act so out of before. What is the matter?"

The man turned around, almost angrily. "You know what the matter is, Miss Rochester, as well as I do," he said, bitterly. "Oh, Audrey, I didn't look for this utter heartlessness in you!"

He bowed his head upon his hands, with a despairing gesture. Something in it seemed to soften the girl for a moment. She came closer, and laid a little jeweled hand upon his arm.

"Pshaw, Tom! you'll get over it, never fear; and besides, there is any quantity of girls to be had for the asking."

He shook her off, almost roughly. "Get over it!" he repeated, sarcastically; "you do well to tell me that! And you—you will marry Ray Clifford, with his handsome face, gallant way, and—twenty thousand a year. And without loving him at that! I tell you, Audrey Rochester, you are a heartless flirt!"

"Come, Tom, don't be a simpleton," impatiently clasping and unclasping the bracelet upon her arm. "Of course I shall marry Mr. Clifford. He is rich, and can get me everything I want, and I have no doubt we shall get along finely."

The man raised his head. His face was ghastly in the deep shadow, and his eyes had a wild, unnatural look. Before he could reply, a quick step sounded near, and then a tall form, in Turkish costume, mask in hand, stood before them. Miss Rochester gave a little cry, as she recognized Ray Clifford, and then shrunk back in the shadow, knowing, full well, what was coming by the stern, contemptuous light shining in his dark eyes.

"I beg leave to differ with Miss Rochester," he said, bowing, "since an accident has discovered to me her true character. I presume I am safe in asking to be released from an engagement, which was entered into on her part solely from mercenary motives. I suppose I can consider myself a free man."

His voice was low and courteous, but with a perceptible tinge of sarcasm in it, and never before had Audrey Rochester felt, so much, the insignificance of herself, and the nobleness of Ray Clifford. She murmured a few words, almost unintelligible, and with another cold bow Ray walked on toward the house.

In one of the lower halls he encountered a queenly figure, attired as Bertranda. It was Lillie; he knew her in an instant.

"Most gracious lady," he said, with a gallant bow, "may an unpunctuated follower of the true Prophet claim the privilege of a five minutes' walk on the piazza?"

She bowed in graceful acknowledgment, and taking his arm passed out. The veranda was almost deserted, and they paused an instant in the shadow at one end.

"And how does Miss Leicester enjoy the ball?" asked her cavalier.

The lady was silent for a moment; then, with a little laugh, removed her mask.

"I may as well here in the shadow, seeing

that you know me," she answered; "and I can tell you that I think the ball splendid, Mr. Clifford."

"Diamond cut diamond," he returned, laughing in his turn, and removing his mask. "Do you know," leaning toward her suddenly, "that this masked ball is the turning-point in my life?"

This sudden earnestness frightened her. She endeavored to wrench the hand he had clasped from him, but he held it firm.

"I am a free man, Lillie—free to love whom I please," he said, "and by Miss Rochester's full consent. She is no longer anything to me; but you, oh, my darling, you are everything, my very life! You shall hear the circumstances, and judge whether I have not a perfect right to tell you this."

He related hurriedly to her all that had passed that evening in the shrubbery, and then, holding both her hands in his, he looked into her shy, sweet face for his answer. She lifted her brown eyes, all misty with unshed tears, to his.

"Oh, Ray, Ray!" she said, "I do love you, better than life!"

Was he satisfied? I think he ought to have been. And Miss Rochester is Miss Rochester still.

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THE SWORD OF HUNKER BILL.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

He lay upon his easy bed,
His eyes were growing dim;
He wore two pairs of spectacles,
And called his son to him.
"Come, wipe your snoot," the hero said,
"And for a while be still,
And quickly from your antlers bring
The sword of Hunker Bill."

The sword was brought; his spectacles
Lit with a sudden flame;
He took the ancient corn cut-ter—
Escalibur by name without soap,
And said, "My boy, go in the field
And labor with a will,
And out and slash at them there weeds
With the sword of Hunker Bill."

"This sword revolved in the old Rev.
Olutionary days;
It cut full many a goosehead off
That came along our ways.
In battle every Britisher
Felt that it swung to kill,
His body from his head was loosed
By the sword of Hunker Bill."

"I whetted it upon a brick
And cut their hair in style;
I shaved their faces without soap,
And yet they didn't smile.
Whenever they saw this good sword raised,
They felt a sudden thrill,
And so I cut their coat-tails off
With the sword of Hunker Bill."

"This sword has active service seen
When we'd put up our pork,
And when I kept a butcher-shop
It's seen some bloody work.
It has some nicks that came from knooks,
But it is good stuff still,
It looks some like a hand-saw, but
It's the sword of Hunker Bill."

"I cannot leave you gold or lands,
But this is just as good,
Take this and at six bits a cord,
Go out and chop some wood!
The hero's spectacles grow dim;
He rose up with a will,
And spanked the boy outrageously
With the sword of Hunker Bill."

LEAVES

From a Lawyer's Life.

BY A. GOULD PENN.

IX.—The Birch-bark Will.

Law and justice are not synonymous terms, as many would like to believe; and no class of men become better acquainted with this fact than lawyers.

I would not have you think, kind reader, I am so egotistical as to claim that I am always on the right side. Indeed, so far from this being the case, I, in common with others of my profession, am frequently called upon to espouse a bad cause.

The vilest criminal is entitled to the benefit of legal assistance, and every lawyer should hold himself ready to guard a client against any infringement of his natural rights.

A stranger stopped into my office one day, and handed me a card, on which was the name of "Jacob Ellet, Jr."

"You are Mr. Smith, I presume?"

"Yes, sir, that is my name; what can I do for you?"

"I have come to consult with you about an important matter," said the man, seating himself with great deliberation.

As is my usual custom, I at once proceeded to take the measure of my visitor, and the inspection resulted in my forming a very unfavorable opinion of him.

He was a man of apparently thirty-five years of age, and dressed somewhat flashily. But his countenance plainly showed him to be a hard drinker, and, indeed, his breath and actions convinced me that he was even then in a state of inebriation. Yet his condition was not such as to seemingly affect his locomotion or to obscure his mind, and he spoke readily and very intelligently.

"I am the only son of Jacob Ellet, the great lumber-merchant, of whom I suppose you have often heard?"

"Certainly, sir. I knew your father well, having frequently transacted business for him. He is dead, I believe."

"Yes, sir, and it was in reference to the estate that I called to consult with you."

"Did your father leave a will?"

"He did, sir, and I will now state to you the facts, and ask you what you think of my rights under the will."

"I have an only sister, Bessie, now about twenty-five years of age. We two are mentioned in father's will as his only heirs. His estate, as you are probably aware, is quite large. But, in order to give you a full understanding of the matter I must tell you something of my personal history."

"Father and I never got along well together, so at twenty years of age I left home, and have not been back until recently. I was a spoiled boy, and inclined to be rough; in fact, I have lived a desperate life among the fast characters of an Eastern city. I don't need to tell you the extent of my operations, but I have been through the roughest phases of such a life, and am not yet a very good subject out of which to form a missionary, as you see."

Truly, the fellow is decidedly frank, I thought.

"Well, hearing of father's death, I thought perhaps there would be something for me out of his estate, so I came home, and hunted up his will—in which he makes me a full heir."

"Now, in come certain officious friends of sister Bessie, and persuade her to contest that will and claim all the estate, saying that I was not deserving of even a shilling, and that father had repeatedly declared his intentions of cutting me off without a cent. Hence they claim that this will is bogus, or that there is a codicil or new will that father made. But, I don't propose to give up my rights on their supposing; so they are about to enter suit to break the will."

"Is the will duly probated?" I asked.

"It is; and here is a certified copy of it," handing me the document.

I took it and examined it carefully. It was without doubt the bona fide last will and testament of Jacob Ellet, Sr., in which he divided his possessions equally between his son Jacob and daughter Bessie.

There could be no mistaking this fact, and no amount of verbal testimony would avail to set it aside.

"What do you think of it?" anxiously inquired Ellet, as I ceased my inspection of the will.

"What do they propose to show, as to your father's intentions concerning the disposition of his property?" I asked, evasively, not being sufficiently clear in my own mind to answer his question pointedly.

"They claim that my father said in the presence of various persons that I was a bad dog, and should never see a farthing of his money. And that he told others that he meant to destroy this will and make another, ignoring me. Also, I believe, they will claim that he was not of sound mind at the time of making this will."

"Stuff—nonsense!" I cried, becoming more

convinced that the will was valid; "let them try it, and see how they will get badly beaten."

So it was arranged that we, Smith & Ayres, were to defend this will, and Jacob Ellet, Jr., left.

On making some inquiry I found that our client was a man of the blackest character, and that he had even made threats of a terrible revenge against his sister and her advisers if they should succeed in depriving him of his inheritance.

"Will we not risk a great deal in reputation by assisting such a scoundrel?" asked Lewis Ayres, one day, after we had learned the facts.

"I admire your caution, Lewis, but then the character of our client cannot effect the justice of his claim under this will. He may be ever so undeserving of his good fortune, but that is no fault of ours. Gordon & Strong, from the city, will be our opponents, and they will try our mettle, my boy."

"Very well; so much the better if we win," said Ayres.

"We must win!" I exclaimed.

Sure enough, the action was promptly commenced to set aside the will of Jacob Ellet, and as we were equally desirous of arriving at the end of the matter but little time was occupied in legal skirmishing, and in due time the case was called for trial.

We found we had not underestimated the talents of Gordon & Strong, but, secure in the belief that they could never produce sufficient testimony to break the will, we felt that victory was in our grasp.

The trial occupied some days, and all their testimony as to the validity of the will, their competency of the testator, and verbal promises and declarations came to naught, until we at last found that our opponents were merely fighting for time. What object they could have in this we could not fathom, and hence we were working hard to bring the case to a close.

"What do you make of this desire on their part for delay?" Ayres asked me.

"I cannot understand it," I replied, "unless they are expecting to get in some new testimony, but I cannot imagine what it may be."

"They have been using the telegraph very frequently, I find," said Ayres, "and it may

be they are expecting some important witness from a distance."

"Possibly," I answered, more puzzled than ever at the announcement.

But I determined to ascertain, if possible, whether there was any probability of new and important evidence on their side, so I sought Jacob Ellet, Jr., and asked:

"Do you know of any witnesses they might use from the lumber regions where your father died?"

The question startled him somewhat.

"No," he replied, "I have never heard fully the particulars of my father's death; some sudden accident or fall, I believe. He was getting out timber at the time, and it may be he told his men something about disinheriting me."

"I was still puzzled, and at last resolved to await developments, and then be governed accordingly."

Again we met in trial, and I observed a smile of satisfaction on the faces of Gordon and Strong as a new witness was called and sworn.

Strong handled the witness, and plied his questions in rapid succession.

"State your acquaintance with the deceased, Jacob Ellet," he demanded.

"I met Mr. Ellet in the pinery for the first time, and he worked with us some two months, until the accident which caused his death."

"State to the court and jury how that accident came about."

"I will do so. Mr. Ellet, another hand and myself went away from our cabin one morning, to cut timber, a distance of nearly five miles. Mr. Ellet was rather too old a man and too feeble to do such hard work as we were engaged in, but he employed his time in superintending the workmen, and purchasing timber in the tree. He was standing a few feet from where one of the men was cutting down a large pine, engaged in a trade with the owner of the timber. As the tree began to totter, I saw it would fall in his direction, so I shouted to him to apprise him of the danger, but it was too late. He went down under the heavy branches, and we were obliged to work hard to get him out. We succeeded at last and found that he was not dead, but so terribly crushed that he could not live very long."

"Well, well, how long did Mr. Ellet live after this?" asked Strong, in his blustering manner.

"We carried him to the squatter's cabin about a mile away, and did for him the best we could, but he only lived an hour in great suffering."

"Did he have anything to say?"

"Yes sir; he spoke about having neglected to change or cancel a will he had once made. He knew he was going to die, and asked for writing materials to make a will or codicil or some such instrument. But there was not a drop of ink or a scrap of paper to be had. Here the witness hesitated, and I felt assur-

ed that his testimony was like the rest, of no avail, but under Strong's questioning he continued:

"After thinking a little while, as if not minding his sufferings, he told me to bring him a clean piece of birch-bark. I accordingly went out and found a nice piece and brought it to him; then he told my friend, who was a man of some education, to take a piece of red chalk that we used to mark timber, and he dictated while he wrote."

In an instant I was on my feet and demanded that the writing be at once produced, or the testimony ruled out.

Smiling at my eagerness, Gordon produced a roll of birch-bark and demanded of the witness if that was the identical piece used on the occasion.

"It is," answered the witness.

"May it please the court," said Gordon, "we have here what we claim to be a valid codicil to the will of Jacob Ellet, deceased, and we ask that it be duly admitted to probate and placed on record."

He then proceeded to read as follows:

"Whereas I, Jacob Ellet, Sr., did on the 4th day of May, 18—, make my last will and testament of that date, I do declare the following to be a codicil to the same: I do hereby give and bequeath to my daughter, Bessie Ellet, all my estate, both real and personal, of whatsoever kind, to the entire exclusion of my son, Jacob Ellet, Jr."

This codicil was duly signed, and properly witnessed, and the two lumber-men who had witnessed his signature, came forward and proved the same.

To say we were astonished and confounded, but poorly tells our feelings. There was no avoiding this evidence; the Birch Bark Will was perfect.

It was admitted to probate, of course, and our case was terminated in a manner that we could not have foreseen or prevented.

But our chagrin was as nothing compared to the bitter cursing of our client. All the venom of his depraved heart was let out, and he left the court-room muttering direst threats.

That night the Ellet mansion was burned to the ground, and there was no doubt but that the wicked son had applied the torch. But he made good his escape and we never again saw or heard of him.



"Vida!" he cried, eagerly. "You are safe, and the blood of the pirate Mafordi is on my steel!"

The Red Mafordi.

BY C. D. CLARK.

THE year 1815.

The waters of the Caribbean Sea are at rest, and the purple islands on its breast sleep in beauty.

A beautiful brig, close-hauled, on the star-board tack, was gliding through the blue water, under easy canvas. Her crew, dark-browed and rather sinister-looking men, of mixed Spanish and Indian blood, lounged about the deck, leaving the ship almost wholly in charge of the man at the wheel, who seemed to understand well the navigation of these isles.

Standing aft, not far from the wheel, was a gray-haired man of stately presence, with a beautiful girl leaning on his arm.

"You are quite a sailor now, Vida," he said, turning his eyes upon her lovely face.

"How do you like the life?"

"I shall not regret Rio Janeiro," replied Vida, with a gay laugh. "Perhaps it is for the best that you were outlawed by the government of Brazil, for you know that favor is short-lived in the South American States, and you cannot tell at what moment you will be under ban."

"You are right, my dear Vida. Although they saw fit to banish me, they did not take from me the wealth I had gained, in all these years I have been in their service. That treasure is on board this brig."

"Father, father!" whispered Vida.

She was too late. The dark-browed man who held the wheel had heard and understood the words spoken by the old gentleman.

"Come into the cabin," said Vida.

They descended, and she turned a wild look upon him.

"Father," she cried, "what were you thinking of when you said in the presence of Matteo Muro that you had a great treasure on board?"

"It was a strange slip for me to make," he said, uneasily. "But do you really think he heard me?"

"I know it, as well as I can be certain of anything. When I turned, his malicious eyes were fixed upon me, with a look which it is hard to interpret. I never liked the bold eyes of Matteo Muro."

She had hardly spoken, when there came a tap at the cabin door. Matteo Muro came in, with a strange look upon his face. He was a

man of powerful build, with erect, sinewy frame, eyes full of deadly purpose, and a mouth whose sensual expression nothing could hide.

"I thought you were at the wheel, Matteo," said the old gentleman.

"So I was; but I wished to speak with you, and called Goddo to take my place. I have a little business with you, which I prefer to settle now."

"What do you mean?"

"I wish to say that I know all about you."

"Indeed?"

"You are Doctor William Vail, for some time Inspector General of the hospitals, under Don Emmanuel. You were exiled because you would not bend entirely to his will, but were allowed to take your wealth with you."

"My wealth is easily counted, Matteo. And even supposing that it were not so, what is that to you?"

"Your wealth does not make much show, certainly. Diamonds are easily packed."

"Diamonds?"

"It appears so. Don William Vail, you have in this cabin, somewhere, a small bag of diamonds, into which you converted your wealth before leaving Brazil. These diamonds are worth a million, and I want a share in them."

"A share?"

"Understand me, Don William. I am going to take my share in a gentlemanly way, and that way is this: I am willing to marry the Senora Vida."

Doctor Vail bounded to his feet, and struck the impatient scoundrel across the face with his open hand.

"You dog! How dare you come to me with such a proposition as that?"

"It is an impudent proposition, say you?" he demanded, hoarsely. "You have dared to strike me in the face, and the mark will not leave my cheek until the insult has been atoned for, in one way or another. Curse you, I come of better blood than you, and you might think it an honor to mate your daughter with me. My father was a count of Italy."

"If you dare speak of it again, I will have you thrust into the hold, in double irons."

"Ah! And who will put me there, most noble Don William? You forget that I command this brig, that the men are of my choosing, and that there is not one among them who

Vida retired with the woman, and the doctor turned again to the Red Mafordi.

"Now let us understand each other, my man," he said. "It is better to be sure, and then there will be no questions afterward. What do you demand from me?"

"The hand of your daughter in marriage."

"I will give you fifty thousand dollars if you will land me at Key West, St. Augustine, or any other port on the Florida coast. I do this only upon the understanding that I am to be permitted to land with my daughter, safe and sound. Do that, and no questions shall be asked you."

"You are very kind to offer me one-twentieth of the diamonds, which I can have only for reaching out my hand to take them. Once for all, let me say to you that I will accept no terms which do not make your daughter my wife."

"On deck, Mafordi!" cried a voice at the companion-way. "That cursed Yankee is in sight."

"Stay where you are!" roared Red Mafordi.

"Ten thousand curses upon that cruiser, and the man who commands her."

He darted up the companion-way hurriedly, and saw a topsail schooner, with the jaunty rig peculiar to the U. S. Service at this period, bearing down upon them. A gun was discharged as a signal to them to heave to, but Mafordi only shook his clenched hand at the schooner, and ordered his crew to make all sail.

"He knows us, Mafordi," said the man, who acted as mate of "La Palestrina," as the crew leaped into the rigging. "Shall we fight her?"

"While a plank holds together. If we are taken into an American port we shall be hung as pirates, for we are nothing else."

A second shot whistled in front of the brig, but she filled away, and shot through the blue waves, with the wind over her quarter. The commander of the cruiser saw that they did not intend to yield, and the next shot came in over the port-rail, struck the mainmast, and out it off like a carrot. Down came the mast, bringing with it a mass of cordage, and La Palestrina lay a helpless wreck upon the sea.

"My men," cried Mafordi, "you are doomed if you cannot beat off this accursed cruiser. Not a man among you but is guilty of crimes enough to doom him to death by the law. That cruiser chased us after we boarded and stripped the barque, off the Bahamas. They know us, and our only hope is in fight."

"We are ready; lead us, and we will fight to the death," answered the crew.

"Every man keep his pistols out of sight, and be ready to seize cutlasses when I give the word. Down with the colors; throw her up into the wind."

He turned and plunged into the cabin, and called to Doctor Vail.

"You can save us," he said. "If you will come on deck and certify that this is an honest ship, you have nothing more to fear from me."

Vail sprang up the ladder, and took in the situation at a glance. He saw that the pirates were prepared for treachery, and that two boats, containing in all fourteen men, were leaving the side of the schooner, and coming down under the full sweep of the oars. Five minutes later, a gallant-looking young man, in the uniform of a Yankee lieutenant, sprang over the rail, quickly followed by half a dozen of the men, each holding his cutlass bare.

"What brig is this?" demanded the lieutenant.

"La Palestrina, out of Cartagena," replied Mafordi.

"I am Elbert Deane, an officer in the United States navy, and am commissioned by Captain Mauders, of the schooner Jackson, to demand your letters and papers."

"This is an honest brig," whined Mafordi.

"Elbert Deane," cried Doctor Vail, in astonishment and delight. "I am glad to see you here. You have come in time to save me, and my dear daughter, for this is the pirate Mafordi, a man who—"

A cutlass gleamed in the hand of Red Mafordi, and alighted upon the head of the brave old man with a sickening sound. He was standing in the companion-way, and at that dreadful blow, pitched head foremost down the ladder, where he lay bleeding, at the very feet of his daughter, as she sprang from her cabin at the alarm, followed by the negro women, one of whom was her own maid. With a cry of horror Vida Vail flung herself upon the body of her father, while the women, with clasped hands and cries of terror, shrunk into corners of the cabin, or fell upon their knees.

"Down with the murderers!" cried a voice, which seemed strangely familiar to Vida.

"All you Jacksons, away; cutlass and pistols, you sea craft!"

The clash of steel succeeded, and a terrible conflict took place upon the deck of the brig. Although somewhat outnumbered, the blue-jackets were trained men, who had fought all through that war, just ended, in which the United States disputed supremacy with the Mistress of the Sea. Vida heard hoarse cries of rage and despair, and then a stunning cheer. A moment later, and a man appeared at the opening above, and descended the ladder at a bound. It was the young lieutenant, Elbert Deane, bearing in his hand a cutlass crimsoned to the hilt.

"Vida," he cried, eagerly. "You are safe, and the blood of the pirate Mafordi is on my steel. Let me look at your father, and see if he lives."

Doctor Vail did not die, for the cutlass had glanced from the bones, and under the skillful care of the surgeon of the Jackson, he was soon himself again. Vida Vail and Elbert Deane had met in Rio, and had liked each other well. But the good service he had done among the islands of the Caribbean had given her a warmer regard for him, and this ripened into love. And two years from the day when the Red Mafordi went down, with the steel of Elbert Deane in his heart, the two became man and wife.

"RAMROD. No; as a general thing, I wouldn't blow in a gun with my foot on the hammer to see if it is loaded, or try and blow the load out of the touchhole. You can't do it, no use of trying. Don't do it. The load is liable to slip out, and then it leaves such a bad taste in your mouth that you won't have any appetite much. And then it leaves such a load on the brain, that it will be apt to make you forgetful. A man who blows thus in a gun hasn't any brains before or afterward."

J. D. Judging from the poem sent for my perusal, I would say the best paper for you to write on would be foolscap. It is the most poetical of appropriate. Your rhymes jingle like a set of cow-bells, but your measures only pan out two points to the bushel. The last verse of your poem gives more satisfaction to the reader than all the rest. Readers will lay it down with pleasure. Your poetic feet are number 14's, if I am a judge. Your ode is very odious.

BEAT TIME.